

The New Jerusalem Revelation 21:9-21

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to Revelation chapter 21. We're going to be reading together today verses 9 to 21, which are the subject of our sermon.

“⁹ And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; ¹² and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

“¹⁵ And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. ¹⁶ And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. ¹⁸ And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. ¹⁹ And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

As we have studied the book of Revelation together, we have read a great deal about the city of Babylon, which represents anti-Christian society in all of its economic, social, and cultural aspects. Babylon is inhabited by all those with the mark of the beast. Babylon's religion is that of the false prophet. Babylon is ruled by the beast of anti-Christian government. Babylon is the creation of the dragon, who is of course Satan himself.

The totality of this city of Babylon is viewed as a harlot, the great whore who seeks to seduce all people into following Satan by means of temptation, or else by means of persecution. But we have seen in our studies that the dragon, and the beast, and those with the mark of the beast, and the false prophet, and Babylon itself, will all be defeated and destroyed and cast into the lake of fire by Christ.

In contrast to this great harlot Babylon stands the bride of Christ, the new Jerusalem. The bride of Christ and the new Jerusalem both are terms which symbolize the church, which is the Christian society that inhabits the new earth.

We were first introduced to the symbolic image of the church being the bride of Christ back in Revelation 19 and verses 7 through 9, where the emphasis was on the marriage supper of the Lamb. There we saw that Christ and His church, which is made up of all of the resurrected believers of all of the ages, are finally brought together in one place, to be joined together in permanent spiritual union for all eternity. Never again will the saints be separated from Christ, and never again will the saints be separated from each other.

The second mention of the church as the bride of Christ is in Revelation 21 and verse 2, which we looked at just a couple of weeks ago. We saw in that passage the symbolism of the church being the bride of Christ was joined together with the symbolism of the church being the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Notice if you will, chapter 21 and verse 2: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

So both symbolic terms, the new Jerusalem and the bride of Christ, represent the church, and they describe the relationship that believers will have with each other, and the relationship that believers will have with Christ. The symbolism of the holy city conveys the purity and the perfection of the Christian society that will exist on the new earth between believers. The symbolism of the bride conveys the irrevocable commitment that Christ has to His people, and the personal closeness that Christ has with His people.

In relationship to each other, believers are a holy city, a perfect Christian society, in which perfect love prevails between all who live together in that society. And in relationship to Christ, believers are His bride, who enjoy perfect security and personal closeness with Him, and who receive and give a perfect and transcendent love that will never end.

Now this concept of the church being both the new Jerusalem and the bride of Christ that was introduced to us in chapter 21 and verse 2, is now greatly expanded in chapter 21, verse 9, through chapter 22, verse 5. In fact, this is the case with all of the first eight verses of chapter 21. Chapter 21 could have ended with verse 8, and that could have been the end of the book of Revelation. Everything that is going to be said was said in those first eight verses.

Revelation 21, verses 1 to 8, is a very concise summary of the future blessings that Christ has provided to His people in the new heavens and the new earth, but that concise summary is then followed by an expanded description of those blessings in verses 9 of chapter 21, all the way through to verse 5 of chapter 22. And so each of those concepts that is in verses 1 to 8 of chapter 21 is then taken up and greatly expanded in the remainder of chapter 21 and on into chapter 22.

So as we proceed through the section ahead of us, we're going to be revisiting at some length concepts that were only mentioned in verses 1 to 8; in verses 1 to 8 we have the summary, and from verse 9 through to chapter 22, verse 5, we have the expansion of that summary.

Now as John describes the bride, the Lamb's wife, which is pictured here as the holy city of Jerusalem, we must remind ourselves that we are dealing exclusively with visual symbolic imagery. It is important for us to understand that nothing about this city, this new Jerusalem that is described in chapter 21, is to be taken literally. Every aspect of this city is a picture of the church, and no such literal city exists, or ever will exist. Every aspect of this city is a symbol of something else, and therefore we must do away with any notion that the physical descriptions given here will be a physical reality when we come into the new earth. In the new earth, there are no gates made of pearls, and there are no streets made of gold.

Now, that's probably really disappointing to you, but if we're going to be honest with the passage, we have to understand that fact. These are visual images that are symbolic in nature and convey a message about the nature, and the privilege, and the blessing that the church will enjoy in the new earth, as believers live with each other and with Christ for all eternity.

Well, with those introductory comments and perspectives out of the way, having previously seen the ugly whore Babylon, now we're going to see the beautiful bride, the new Jerusalem. In the first place then this morning, let us consider together the appearance of the city.

Notice if you will verse 9. It says, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." This angel that comes to John and says, "Look, I'm going to show you something," appears to be the exact same angel that showed John the judgment of the harlot Babylon back in chapter 17, verse 1, because virtually identical language is used to describe him here in chapter 21 and verse 9 as was used to describe him in chapter 17.

Notice chapter 17 and verse 1. It says, "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." And now chapter 21, verse 9: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." And the reason for this same angel being introduced with this same language is to draw our minds to a contrast between these two cities.

There was a book written by Charles Dickens called *The Tale of Two Cities*, and it was about Paris and London during the time of the French Revolution. And the Bible is a tale of two cities as well: —the city of Man, which is Babylon, and the city of God, which is the new Jerusalem. And this contrast is immediately set up for us in the language that is employed in parallel in chapter 17 and verse 1, and chapter 21 and verse 9.

The significance of this parallel introduction is to draw our minds to the contrast between these two cities that the angel brings to our attention. Babylon is the wicked city of the world that represents anti-Christian society. Jerusalem is the holy city of the kingdom of God that represents Christian society.

The point is, you cannot live in both Babylon and Jerusalem at the same time. To choose one city is to renounce the other city. And so as Christians, we reject the world and we choose the church. We reject wickedness and we choose holiness. We reject humanism and we choose Jesus Christ.

Just as in Revelation 21 and verse 2, here also in verses 9 and 10, the concept of the church as the bride of Christ and the concept of the church as the holy Jerusalem are both combined together. The angel tells John in verse 9 that he's going to show him the bride, the Lamb's wife. In order to do so, he shows him the city of the new Jerusalem in verse 10.

Notice verse 9: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Now you expect him to show John some sort of a beautiful woman. But notice verse 10: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me," not a beautiful woman, but "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Therefore, the holy city is a symbolic picture of the church as the bride of Christ. I'll say that again in case that confused you: The holy city is a symbolic picture of the symbolic picture of the church as the bride of Christ.

So as the angel shows John the new Jerusalem, in the remainder of this chapter and on into the next chapter, he is showing us the nature, and the privilege, and the blessing that the church will enjoy in all of its perfection as it dwells on the new earth in the personal presence of Jesus Christ.

Now I want us to notice three points about the appearance of this city. As to the appearance of the city, notice first of all, the glory of the city. The glory of the city is stated in verses 10 and 11. It says, "¹⁰ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,"—now here it is —"¹¹ having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

So in verse 10, the church is said to be descending out of heaven from God, because all the resurrected and living saints have been raptured up into heaven when Christ returned, and now they descend down out of heaven into the new earth. And what is being conveyed by this language is that church has a heavenly origin. It comes down from above. And the reason why it has a heavenly origin is because from heaven her salvation was planned, from heaven her Savior was given, and from heaven the Spirit was sent. The church has a heavenly origin, and this is why in verse 10, the city that represents her is said to descend from heaven.

But the church has more than her origins from God, she also reflects the glory of God, as verse 11 says: “having the glory of God.” That’s a very profound and wonderful statement: The church *has* the glory of God. You may ask the question: what is the glory of God? Well, the answer is: God’s glory, is His attributes. His attributes, that is, who He is, is the expression of His glory.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, and as a result, they perfectly reflected God’s communicable attributes to the degree they were given the capacity to do so by God. In the beginning, Adam and Eve had the glory of God. But we know that Adam and Eve fell. The image of God in them became deeply disfigured, and the reflection of God’s glorious attributes in them became clouded and darkened by human depravity. But in salvation, that glorious image of God in us is being progressively restored, first by regeneration, then by growth in Christ-likeness, and ultimately by glorification at the resurrection.

And so here, at the end of the age, at the second coming of Christ, the image of God in man will be fully and perfectly restored, and the church will shine forth with a perfect display of God’s character and God’s holiness that will make the church brilliant and glorious. The church will have the glory of God, because the church will have been restored to the perfect image of God in which she was originally made, and she will then manifests the communicable attributes of God to the fullest extent possible in her person and in her conduct.

This glory that the church has is simply the possession of likeness to Christ. First John 3 and verse 2 says we will be like Him, when we see Him at His second coming. And to be like Christ, is to have the glory of God. Romans 8 and verse 29 says that we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. And when we fully obtain that image, we will shine with the glory of God. This glory that will shine out of us is likened to the radiance of a brilliant, flawless diamond. This stone is called in verse 11, notice, a jasper stone. It says, “having the glory of God: and her light was like,” or compared with, “a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” And so this glory that will shine out of us is likened to the radiance of a brilliant, flawless diamond.

Now this stone in verse 11 is called a jasper stone, but the Greek word translated “jasper” occurs only in the book of Revelation, and its meaning is somewhat uncertain. But the stones that we know as jaspers in our day and age are opaque—they are not clear as crystal. So it seems that this stone that is mentioned in verse 11 is more like a diamond than anything else, since it is said to be as clear as crystal. So just as Moses’ face shined with the glory of God when he came down from Sinai after meeting with God, so the church will shine with the brilliant reflected light of the glory of God, just like a diamond flashes back the light that is shined into it.

It is the hope of obtaining this glory that is repeatedly set before believers in the New Testament as an incentive to persevere in the faith, and as an inspiration to continue on in faithfulness to Christ. As it says in Romans 8:18, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with”—what?—“the glory which shall be revealed in us.” It is this glory described here in Revelation 21 and verse 11, that Paul is promising to us in Romans 8:18, that

shall be revealed in us. It is the glory of perfect conformity to the character of Jesus Christ. So as we look at the appearance of the city, the first thing we see is the glory of the city in verses 10 and 11.

But not only do we see the glory of the city, notice secondly, the wall and the gates of the city. Notice verse 12. It says the city “had a wall great and high.” So this city has a wall great and high. Historically, cities had walls for safety, for security, and for protection. What is it that provides the church with her safety and her security and her protection? Well the answer is, what provides us with safety and security and protection is the salvation that God has given to us.

Please turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 60. I want you to notice together verses 14 to 22. Isaiah chapter 60, beginning at verse 14: “¹⁴ The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” And so in the day of judgment, we are going to be vindicated before all of the wicked who so persecuted us, and they’re going to bow down to us and they’re going to say, You people—you are truly the city of God. And so those that lorded it over us, will be bowing at our feet.

Verse 15: “¹⁵ Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. ¹⁶ Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. ¹⁷ For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.” Now here it is, verse 18: “¹⁸ Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

“¹⁹ The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. ²⁰ Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

“²¹ Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. ²² A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.”

Now what we have here in Isaiah is a prophetic declaration of the blessing of the people of God and the dwelling place of the people of God in the new earth. And He says, regarding the walls that surround the city and the new earth, that these walls shall be called “Salvation.” And if you are familiar at all with Revelation 21, especially the remainder that we have not yet expounded, you will recognize that whole phrases are lifted from this passage in Isaiah chapter 60 and used by John in Revelation chapter 21.

So this wall around the new Jerusalem represents the salvation that the church has received. This same truth is echoed in Isaiah 26. You're in Isaiah 60—just turn back please to Isaiah chapter 26. Notice verses 1 and 2: ¹“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. ²Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”

And so this imagery of our ultimate destiny being a glorious city is one that is rooted in the Old Testament in the book of Isaiah, and the walls that surround this city are twice declared to be “salvation.” God provided abundant opportunity to enter into the salvation He provided, and this is why the city has twelve gates within its walls, and this is why they're all open and they're never shut—because at any time, anyone may come into the city through the gates and experience the salvation that all those within the city enjoy.

Now then, turn back please to Revelation chapter 21. I want you to notice verses 12 and 13. It says, ¹²“and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.”

Here we see that this city not only has a wall, we also see that the city itself is a square with a north, south, east, and west wall, and each of these walls has three gates, for a total of twelve gates. These gates are guarded by twelve angels, one of them at each gate, who control who goes into those gates. Entrance into God's city, the church, is not open to anyone who chooses to just waltz in on any terms. Those gates only admit those to whom God gives the right.

In Revelation 21, notice verse 27: “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.” And this is why the angels are at the gates—to guard who comes in. And certain people are kept out—those described in verse 27. And it is those who are believers in Jesus Christ, who have the salvation of Christ, who are allowed to enter in.

So the angels ensure no unsaved people will ever be found within the church that dwells on the new earth. The angels are going to be sent, and they're going to gather the believers and they're going to gather the unbelievers and they're going to bring them to the judgment. Then they're going to ensure that only the believers wind up in the new earth. Only those who are saved will enter through the gates and be counted as members of the church in God's eternal kingdom.

Now the significance of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel being inscribed on these gates is that Old Testament Israel was the means God used to prepare and provide a way to enter into the salvation that God has provided. It was through Israel that Jesus came, and therefore it was through Israel that the doors of salvation were open to the whole world. We see this back in Revelation chapter 12 verses 1 and 2, when we saw ¹“a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

² and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” And of course, she brought forth Jesus Christ.

And so Israel was the means through which Messiah came into the world, and thus salvation was provided to the world. It was through Israel that Jesus came, and therefore it was through Israel that the doors of salvation were open to the whole world. And this is the significance of the names of the twelve tribes being on the doors of the wall of Salvation.

Now this city is a four-sided city. And we know that the number four conveys the concept of the entire world, because it represents the four points of the compass—north, south, east, and west. The point is, through these twelve gates, there has been abundant opportunity for the whole world to enter into the salvation Christ has provided and be brought together into the fellowship of the church, no matter where in the world they lived, or what direction they came from. Jesus Himself said in Luke 13 and verse 29, “And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.”

So the church in the new earth is made up of the saved from all over the earth who come to salvation through the means provided through Old Testament Israel, which is Jesus Christ. The gates of salvation have always been open to anyone from anywhere who will enter through them on God’s terms, which is faith in God’s Son as their Lord and as their Savior.

This brings us then to our third point, as we consider the appearance of the city. Having seen the glory of the city in verses 10 and 11, having seen the wall and the gates of the city in verses 12 to 13, notice thirdly the foundation of the city in verse 14. It says in verse 14, “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” Now just as Old Testament Israel was the means through which God brought salvation to the church, the New Testament apostles were the means through which God provided the doctrinal foundation *for* the church.

Turn in your Bibles please to Ephesians chapter 2. I want to read together verses 19 to 22, and we’ll see that this imagery is clearly declared by Paul in this letter to Ephesus. Ephesians 2, verse 19 to 22 says:

“¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;”—now here it is—“²⁰ and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; ²¹ in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: ²² in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

And so it was the work of the apostles and the writings of the apostles that took the church from being a few people in a small geographical spot to being a multitude which no man could number, from all across the world, and from every kindred and tongue and tribe and nation. The apostles wrote the New Testament, which established the doctrinal foundation of the church by

setting forth and preserving the record of the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ. The apostles also spread the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth—north, south, east, and west. The apostles brought the gospel to the Gentiles, and the apostles made the gospel a worldwide religion for all peoples, no matter where they lived.

So by means of these things—by the apostles preserving the record and the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ, and by the apostles spreading the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth—by these things, the apostles were the foundation of the church. They brought the Lamb of God to the whole world in their writings, and they brought the Lamb of God to the whole world in their evangelism.

The fact that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the gates, and the fact that the names of the twelve apostles are on the foundation stones, conveys the truth that the Old Testament and New Testament people are all just one church, that Christ has one bride, and that there is a single salvation that unifies them all into one body. This city is the one that Abraham was seeking, when it says of him in Hebrews 11 and verse 10 that “he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The new earth is the actual promised land of which Canaan was a foreshadow, and the new Jerusalem is the actual city of God, which has the foundations for the full potential of a Christian society finally being fully realized. This, then, is the appearance of the city—its glory, its wall and its gates, and its foundation.

This brings us to our second major point this morning. Having seen the appearance of the city in verses 9 to 14, notice secondly the measurement of the city in verses 15 to 17. Notice if you will verse 15. It says, “And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.” Here we are told the angel uses a golden measuring stick to measure the city.

Now we were introduced to this concept of measurement back in Revelation chapter 11, verses 1 and 2, when the New Covenant temple, which is the church on this present earth, was measured. As you recall, there we learned that measuring has nothing to do with the actual dimensions of the object being measured, because measurement in the book of Revelation is a symbolic act, not a literal one, and that is also true in other books of the Old Testament as well.

In Revelation 11, we saw that measurement was for the purpose of marking out for preservation the thing that was being measured. It’s like you put a fence around your garden—you mark it out for preservation from being assaulted by the deer and the rabbits, right? And so there is this marking out, this measuring out of the church for protection that occurred in Revelation chapter 11, verses 1 and 2. So the church on earth was marked out for protection and preservation by God. The lesson was that the church would never be destroyed from the face of the earth by her enemies. God would protect her. He put His line of protection around her, as it were.

Now this same meaning regarding the act of measurement is also being conveyed by the measurement of the new Jerusalem that is being done in Revelation chapter 21. By this

measurement that's taking place, God is saying that the new Jerusalem, the church on the new earth, will forever be preserved and protected by God for all eternity. In the new earth, God has measured out and marked out His church as the special object of His care and His protection, and nothing will ever again be able to attack it or to harm it.

To illustrate this point, I would like us to turn to Zechariah chapter 2—second to the last book in the Old Testament. Zechariah chapter 2, notice verse 1: “¹I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.” Well, we're going to do some measurement here. “²Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem,”—imagine that—“to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.” Exactly the same thing the angel is doing in Revelation 21.

“³And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,”—so now we've got two angels, and they're going to have a conversation—“⁴and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man,” that is, to Zechariah, “saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein.”

In other words, Jerusalem is going to be so big, it's going to be impossible to contain it within literal walls. What do we have in heaven? “A multitude which no man can number, of every kindred, tongue, tribe, and nation”—try to build a wall around *that*. It's going to be huge. But notice verse 5: “⁵for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” God says, I am going to provide the protection for this city.

“⁶Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. ⁷Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.” And here we have our two cities, right? Jerusalem and Babylon. “⁸For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” The pupil, that little dark spot in the middle of your eye, which is the most sensitive part of your eye—you protect that over everything. Somebody tries to poke you in the eye, you'll do anything to protect that. And God says that this new Jerusalem is the apple of His eye, and He will protect it, He will be a wall of fire around it, and protect it as closely as one would protect the very center of their eyeball.

Verse 9: “⁹For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me. ¹⁰Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.” So God is going to dwell in the midst of the new Jerusalem. He will be with us, and He will be our God, and we will be His people.

Verse 11: “¹¹And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day,”—from north, south, east, and west—“and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. ¹²And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in

the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. ¹³ Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.”

Now in verse 1, we see that here’s a man coming to measure. And what is the result of that measurement? Verse 5 says, I am going to be a wall of fire of protection around my city. And in verses 8 and 9, He says, He who touches you is like one who touches the apple of my eye. He says, I will shake mine hand on them, and they shall be a spoil, and you shall know that the Lord is the one who protects you. And then in verses 10 and 11, He says, Sing and rejoice. I will come. I will dwell in the midst of you. I will dwell in the midst of you—He says it twice—And thou shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto thee.

So Zechariah is speaking in chapter 2 about the events in Revelation 21 and 22, in relationship to the new Jerusalem and the protection that God will give to the new Jerusalem. The point is, because of this measurement and what it means about the protection of God, in the new earth, the church will be absolutely secure.

Now turn back please to Revelation 21. In Revelation 21, verses 16 and 17, it says, “¹⁶ And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.” Here we are told that this city is a perfect cube. It has the same length and width and height in each dimension, and each of those dimensions is said to be twelve thousand furlongs.

So what we have here is a symbolic shape and a symbolic dimension. The reason why the city is pictured as a perfect cube is because the holy of holies in the Old Testament tabernacle, where the glory and presence of God dwelt, was also a perfect cube. The Holy of Holies in the Old Testament tabernacle was ten cubits wide, ten cubits long, and ten cubits high.

So by describing the church as being a perfect cube, like the Holy of Holies was, John is conveying to us that the perfect church on earth is going to be indwelt by the glory of God and the presence of God, just like the Old Testament tabernacle was indwelt by the presence and glory of God in the Holy of Holies.

God is going to dwell in our midst—that’s the significance of the church being pictured as a perfect cube. The church is the new Holy of Holies. This is another reason why we read in verse 11 of Revelation 21 that the city has the glory of God, not only because we will reflect the glory of God in the restored image of God in us, but also because the very person and glory of God Himself will dwell in our midst.

The reason why the cube is said to be twelve thousand furlongs wide and long and tall is because twelve conveys the concept of the people of God, and ten conveys the concept of perfection and totality, here multiplied by itself three times to intensify its meaning. So we have ten cubed,

times twelve, for the measurement of the cube. Twelve times ten times ten times ten, which equals twelve thousand, conveys the idea that in the new earth dwells the perfect totality—that's ten times ten times ten, of all of the people of God, times twelve, from all of human history. Not one of them is missing.

The word “furlongs” in the Greek is “stadia,” from which we get our word stadium. A stadia is about an eighth of a mile, which is 660 feet. So twelve thousand stadia is equal to about one thousand five hundred miles, if you were going to literalize this measurement. One thousand five hundred miles is about the distance from the Canadian border to the Mexican border, at the tip of Texas. And one thousand five hundred miles is the distance from the Pacific Ocean to the Great Lakes. A square of one thousand five hundred miles by one thousand five hundred miles would cover 70% of the land mass of the continental United States.

Now of course these numbers are not meant to be taken literally, and I'm not suggesting that they should be, but the size of these numbers conveys to us the vastness of the size of the church in the new earth. Revelation 7, verse 9, says the church before the throne of God is a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. So the church in the new earth is perfectly complete, it is vast in number, and the glory and presence of God dwells in the midst of it.

Notice verse 17: “And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.” Verse 17 tells us this city is surrounded by a wall, and we've already seen that this wall is salvation, and the symbolic measurement that's given to this wall is one hundred forty four, in this case, cubits.

Whether this measurement, one hundred forty four cubits, is a measurement of the height of the wall or the thickness of the wall does not matter, because both the wall and its measurement are symbolic. We have already seen in verse 12 that this wall represents salvation, and the number one hundred forty four is twelve times twelve. And of course, twelve conveys the concept of the people of God, and twelve times twelve is just an intensification of that concept.

Now we have run across this number one hundred forty four previously in the book of Revelation, and we have seen in Revelation 7 and verse 4, and in Revelation 14, verses 1 and 3, that one hundred forty four thousand represents the totality of the people of God. The point is, regarding this wall that has this measurement of one hundred forty four, is that all of the people of God—that's the twelve times twelve—are all encompassed with God's salvation, that's the wall. And all of them are within God's saving purposes and God's saving work.

We are all surrounded with the wall of salvation, and none of us is outside of that wall. The perfect totality of all of the people of God of all of the ages are within the wall of salvation. We are all surrounded with the wall of salvation. The point is, no unsaved people will be in the new Jerusalem, which is of course the church that dwells in the new earth.

Having seen the appearance of the city in verses 9 to 14, and the measurement of the city in verses 15 to 17, notice thirdly and finally the material of the city. The material of the city is spoken of in verses 18 to 21. Verses 18 to 21 tell us the various building materials that are used in the construction of the new Jerusalem. Notice:

“¹⁸ And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. ¹⁹ And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

What is that? It’s a list of building materials, right? The purpose of this list of these symbolic construction materials used to build this city is to convey a message about the beauty of the church, to convey a message about the purity of the church, to convey a message about the value of the church, and to convey a message about the permanence of the church. Gold and pearls and precious stones are items of great value, they are items of intense beauty, they are items of endless longevity, and they are items of flawless purity.

Verse 18 tells us the wall was made of jasper, which we saw in verse 11 is probably a diamond because it’s clear as crystal, which is the most valuable stone that there is. The wall represents salvation, of course, and that salvation is as valuable and beautiful and durable as diamond is. And so the wall is not only the wall of salvation, but it is the most valuable, beautiful, durable, conceivable salvation that could possibly be provided. It is likened unto a diamond.

It also says in verse 18 that the city itself was pure gold, that is, the whole city—that whole cube was pure gold. In fact, the purity of the gold was so great that its purity was at the same level that clear glass must have if it is in fact to be clear glass. It’s not that the gold is clear like glass, but the gold is pure like clear glass is pure.

Just as any imperfection is easy to see in glass, so any imperfection in the church would be easily seen. But there is no imperfection to be seen in the church in the new earth, just as there is no imperfection to be seen in clear glass. In Job 23 and verse 10, Job said about God, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” And that’s why the city is said to be pure gold. We have been through the furnace of affliction, we have been through the furnace of sanctification and glorification, and when we come into heaven, we will be without any pollution, we will be without any defect. We will be perfect, like perfect gold that is as perfectly pure as a perfectly clear piece of glass is pure.

So then, the salvation of the church is exceedingly valuable. It’s like diamond. And the purity of the church is absolutely perfect. It’s as perfect as crystal-clear glass. It’s as valuable as gold.

Now in verses 19 to 20, we are further told that the twelve foundation stones, which represented the twelve apostles, are actually made out of precious gemstones, each gemstone being unique from the other, but all being equally valuable, equally beautiful, and equally permanent.

Now it is possible to assign numerous significances to these twelve stones from the Old Testament, and choosing among the possible significances of these twelve stones is difficult. However, I think the clearest passage that is the closest in parallel description is found in Isaiah chapter 54. So turn please if you would to Isaiah chapter 54. We want to start reading in verse 10 down through verse 14. Here God says to His people:

“¹⁰For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee.” When are the mountains going to depart and the hills be removed? When this old heaven and this old earth are burned up, right? “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” The covenant of peace is the New Covenant. The New Covenant’s never going away. Even after the heavens and the earth pass away, the New Covenant remains. It is eternal. It’s the everlasting covenant, it says in Hebrews 13:20

Now verse 11: “¹¹O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,”—that was their condition right then in Isaiah’s time, that’s our condition right now, isn’t it? That’s us. And He’s talking to us who are tossed and afflicted with tempest and not comforted. He says to us, “behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. ¹²And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. ¹³And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. ¹⁴In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.”

Now the symbolism in Isaiah of God rebuilding Israel with precious stones was an indication that she would experience peace and righteousness and protection—three things she was currently lacking. And you recall it was the apostles through the preaching of the New Covenant, which is the covenant of peace spoken of here, who brought peace with God to the people, and who brought righteousness before God to the people, and who brought protection from God to the people, through their apostolic ministry.

All that is promised here—righteousness, peace, protection—all of that was brought to us by the apostles, as they preached the covenant of peace that was established by God with His people at the Last Supper. Peace and righteousness and protection, which were proclaimed in the New Covenant by the apostles, were the precious and valuable and beautiful gemstones of truth that the apostles gave to the church. The apostles, as it were, scattered costly gemstones of truth wherever they went as they preached the gospel to the people. And that truth that the apostles proclaimed produced peace for those people, and righteousness for those people, and protection for those people, not only in time, but also for all eternity.

The point is, is that the message of the apostles was exceedingly valuable—as valuable as gemstones. Are not righteousness and peace and protection as valuable as gemstones—especially peace with God, and righteousness before God, and protection being provided to you by God—is that not valuable? That’s what the apostles brought us as they preached the covenant of peace, they just scattered with both hands the unsearchable riches of Christ to all of those around them, as they preached the gospel and as they provided the foundation of the church. The apostles built the church, as First Corinthians 3 and verse 12 says, with gold and silver and precious stones.

Turn back please to Revelation 21, and we want to notice verse 21. It says, “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” Now the gates in the wall of salvation are said to be twelve pearls, and these twelve pearls clearly represent Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus also spoke of Himself as the pearl of great price in the parable in Matthew 13, verses 45 to 46.

Furthermore, Jesus said in John chapter 10 and verse 9, “I am the door:”—that is, I am the gate—and “by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” And if the walls represent salvation, then Jesus is the doorway into that salvation.

So Jesus is said to be the pearl of great price, and His gates are made out of, what? Pearls of great price. And these pearls are doors, and He is the door. So He is the one who brings salvation and opens the door to salvation to all peoples from north and south and east and west.

Now I want you to notice in verse 21 that every gate is exactly the same, telling us that there is only one way of salvation, and that is through Jesus Christ. So no matter where you come from—the north, the south, the east, or the west—you all have to enter through the exact same gate, the gate of Jesus Christ, who is the door and the pearl. The apostles differed from one another in gifts, and that’s why they differ from one another in their gemstone designations. But for Christ never differs from Himself, and salvation is the same for everyone, and that is why every gate is the same.

Having seen the gates and the wall in verse 21, notice also in verse 21, the street of the city. The street of the city is said to be pure gold, as pure as perfectly transparent glass is pure. Now once again, this golden street represents and symbolizes Jesus Christ, because Jesus said of Himself in John 14:6, “I am the way.” And the word there is *hodos* in the Greek, which means a road or a street. In other words, Jesus says, I am the street you must walk on if you would come to God. I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to Father but through me, by traveling the road that I am, in order to get to the Father.

So the gates are Christ and the streets are Christ, because He is the pearl of great price, and He is the door into salvation, and He is the way upon which we must walk if we are to arrive at the destination of the Father and of heaven.

So then, each aspect of this city symbolizes some truth about the church. It's a passage that is very dense with symbolic imagery. This new Jerusalem symbolizes the glory and the blessing and the privilege that the church will enjoy in the new earth.

This new Jerusalem, this church, is made up of all of the saved of both the Old and the New Testaments. They constitute the bride of Christ, and the glory and presence of God dwells in this church, and in these people, and with these people, and in the midst of these people. And this church will be holy and pure and protected forever. And so what we have here described in the imagery of this building is a perfect people, living on a perfect earth, in the presence of the perfect Trinity, for all of eternity.

Now I have to ask you: Are you in that church? Have you entered into salvation through Jesus Christ? Have you recognized that He's the only way into the city? You must go through Him and in the way in which He has directed if you are ever going to be a member of this blessed city. May the Lord cause you to repent of your sins and to trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior from those sins, so that these gates might be such that when you approach them, the angel says, Enter into the joy of your Lord. Well, shall we pray together.

Our Father, we thank you for this glorious passage, and Father, what profound depth it contains. What a multitude of glories it teaches. Father, I pray that we would go back and meditate long on this symbolic visual imagery and draw out of it all of the truth that it contains of the glory that shall be revealed in your church when it appears in the new earth, and you dwell in the midst of it.

And now, Father, we long for the day when we shall be there, and we shall be with you, and we shall be your bride, we shall be your city, we shall be the dwelling place of your presence and your glory. Father, hasten that day. May we prepare well for that day. May we follow Christ with all of our hearts until that day, and thus find in that day a "well done" and a glad reception. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.