

Revelation - Chapter Twenty-one

Chapter summary – Human history begins in a Garden and ends in a City that is like a garden paradise. In the Apostle John’s day, Rome was the admired city; yet God compared it to a harlot. “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). The eternal city of God is compared to a beautiful bride (Rev. 21:9), because it is the eternal home for God’s beloved people.

God’s statements recorded in Revelation 21:5–6 aptly summarize these final two chapters: “Behold, I make all things new.... It is done!” What began in Genesis is brought to completion in Revelation, as the following summary shows:

Genesis	Revelation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavens and earth created, 1:1 • Sun created, 1:16 • The night established, 1:5 • The seas created, 1:10 • The curse announced, 3:14–17 • Death enters history, 3:19 • Man driven from the tree, 3:24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New heavens and earth, 21:1 • No need of the sun 21:23 • No night there, 22:5 • No more seas, 21:1 • No more curse, 22:3 • No more death, 21:4 • Man restored to paradise, 22:14 • No more tears or pain, 21:4¹

It is poetic and emblematical; but it is elevating, and constitutes a beautiful and appropriate close, not only of this single book, but of the whole sacred volume—for to this the saints are everywhere directed to look forward; this is the glorious termination of all struggles, and conflicts of the church; it is the result of the work of redemption in repairing the evils of the fall and in bringing man to more than the bliss which he lost in Eden. The mind rests with delight on this glorious prospect; the Bible closes, as a revelation from heaven should, in a manner that calms down every anxious feeling; that fills the soul with peace, and that leads the child of God to look forward with bright anticipations, and to say, as John did, “Come, Lord Jesus,” ch. xxii. 20.²

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IV. the vision of the Final Days, (Chs. 6-22)

F. THE EVENTS FOLLOWING THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON - (19:1-22:5)

9. The new heaven and earth, (21:1-8) - "FINALLY! THE CURSE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH!"

1) Its creation and design, (21:1-4)

NOTES:

COMMENTARY:

¹ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Logos Library System.

² Barnes, *Revelation*, p. 443.

 **INTERPRETATION:**

A New Earth

¹ **Now** (following the Great White Throne Judgment), **I saw a** (brand), **new heaven** (which could mean the atmospheric heavens around the earth, the universe or God's abode), **and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away**, (disappeared or was at least significantly changed). **Also** (on the new earth), **there was no more sea**, (which covers approximately 70% of the earth presently).³

A New Holy City

² **Then** (after the creation of the new earth), **I, John, saw the holy city**, (the), **New Jerusalem** (the new home of all OT and NT saints [Heb. 12:22-24]),

The City's Place of Origin

coming down out of heaven from God (from the abode of God, which was lovingly and beautifully),

The City's Appearance

prepared as a bride (who is beautifully), **adorned for her husband**.⁴

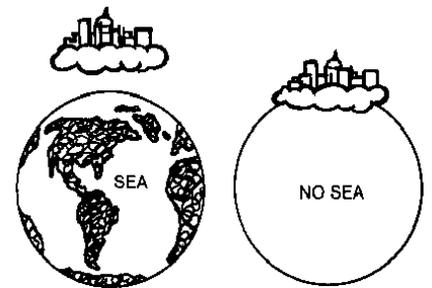
³ As Jesus long ago had predicted (Matthew 24:35), the original earth and its atmospheric heavens had finally passed away. A fiery cataclysm had melted the very elements of that first cosmos (2 Peter 3:10), but God had promised (2 Peter 3:13) that a new heavens and earth would come in which would dwell perfect righteousness. Furthermore *that* heavens and earth, which, like the first, would be "Made" as well as "created" (compare Genesis 2:3 with Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22), would never pass away. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain" (Isaiah 66:22)...

There will, in fact, be no need for a sea on the new earth. The present sea is needed, as was the original antediluvian sea, as a basic reservoir for the maintenance of the hydrologic cycle and the water-based ecology and physiology of the animal and human inhabitants of the earth. In the new earth, however, there will be no animals at all, and presumably all the men and women who live there will have glorified bodies with no more need of water. Their resurrected bodies will be composed, like that of the Lord Jesus, of flesh and bone (Luke 24:39; Philippians 3:21) but apparently with no need of blood (1 Corinthians 15:50) *to serve* as a cleanser and restorer of the body's flesh as at present. This, in turn, eliminates the major need for water on the earth (blood is about 90 percent water, and present-day human flesh about 65 percent water).

Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 436, 437

⁴ Many expositors regard the promise of Christ in John 14:2, "I am going there to prepare a place for you," as referring to this city. The suggestion has been made that if the New Jerusalem is in existence during the millennial reign of Christ, it may have been suspended in the heavens as a dwelling place for resurrected and translated saints, who nevertheless would have immediate access to the earth to carry on their functions of ruling with Christ. J. Dwight Pentecost, for instance, quotes F.C. Jennings, William Kelly, and Walter Scott as supporting this concept of the New Jerusalem as a satellite city during the Millennium (*Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958. pp. 577-79). In the Millennium the New Jerusalem clearly does not rest on the earth, for there is an earthly Jerusalem and an earthly temple (Ezek. 40-48). Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Logos Library System.

NOTES:



A SATELLITE CITY
IN THE
MILLENNIAL
STATE

A SETTLED CITY
IN THE
ETERNAL
STATE

LOCATIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Benson, *Revelation: The Grand Finale of History*, p. 94

The City's King

³ **And** (as the New Jerusalem descended), **I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle** (the residence), **of God is with men** (He now coexists with them), **and He will** (continue to), **dwell with them** (because there is no sin in the world or in man), **and they shall be His people**, (His responsibility and focus of attention). **God Himself will** (literally), **be with them** (commune with them), **and be their God** (their object of worship).⁵

The City's Environment

⁴ **“And God** (in caring for His people), **will wipe away every tear from** (or out of), **their eyes; there shall be no more death** (no one will ever die, or suffer the anguish of dying), **nor sorrow** (experience grief of any kind), **nor crying**, (sobbing, wailing). **There shall be no more** (physical or emotional), **pain, for the former things** (associated with sin), **have passed away**, (as completely and eternally as the old heaven and earth).”

2) It's declared and sure, (21:5)

INTERPRETATION:

The City's Certainty

⁵ **Then He who sat on the throne** (the God of the universe), **said, “Behold, I** (Myself [as Christ built the church]), **make all things new** (“*new*” here means new in character and recently new—signifying a drastic change).” **And He said to me** (the Apostle John), **“Write** (get all of this down), **for these words are true** (reliable), **and faithful**, (genuine).”

F APPLICATION:

FOR the first time God himself speaks; he is the God who is able to make all things new. Again we are back among the dreams of the ancient prophets. Isaiah heard God say: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing” (Isaiah 43:18, 19). This is the witness of Paul: “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God can take a man and re-create him, and will some day create a new universe for the saints whose lives he has renewed.⁶ Everyday is a new and fresh day with God!

⁵ This is the last of 20 times that the expression “a loud voice” is used in Revelation (first used in 5:2—at the throne of God).

The final revelation from heaven states that God will then dwell **with men**, that the saints **will be His people** and He will **be their God**. Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Logos Library System.

⁶ Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Revelation of John - Volume 2 Chapters 6-22 (Revised Edition)*, Available: Logos Library System.

 INTERPRETATION:

The City's Administrator

⁶ **And** (after telling me to write these things down), **He** (the Lamb, Jesus Christ who was able to take the scroll, the title deed to the earth and all that there is therein [cf., Col. 1:16-18]), **said to me, "It is done,** (finished, complete, accomplished, has come to pass)! **I am the Alpha and the Omega** (Rev. 1:8; 22:13), **the Beginning and the End,** (the redeeming person behind the entire drama of human history from beginning to end [Christ is sometimes referred to as the scarlet thread from Genesis through Revelation]).

The City's Inhabitants

I will (throughout the period of human history), **give of the fountain of the water of** (eternal [cf., Jn. 4:13, 14; 7:37, 38]), **life freely** (without cost and not grudgingly, or stingily), **to him** (anyone), **who thirsts,** (whose soul becomes parched under the conviction of sin).

⁷ **"He who overcomes** (to him who not only thirsts, but also exercises saving faith in Christ), **shall inherit all things** (all the blessings that a relationship with the Lamb can render), **and I will be his God** (his object of love and worship), **and he shall be My son** (My object of love and companionship).

The City's Limitations

⁸ **"But** (those who do not overcome), **the cowardly** (who feared the two beasts rather than God), **unbelieving** (who refused to put their faith in the truth of God's witnesses and judgments), **abominable** (who polluted themselves in worshiping the Roman Prince), **murderers** (who turned in friends, family and/or believers to the beasts), **sexually immoral** (who lusted after the harlot's [Babylon's] example), **sorcerers** (who promoted the signs and wonders of the Jewish Antichrist), **idolaters** (who set their affections and loyalties on the beasts and their provisions), **and all liars** (who believed and promoted lies of the beasts rather than the truth of the Word of God), **shall have their part** (in eternity, not in the holy city, but), **in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone** (sulfur), **which is the second death,** (eternal separation from God)."

F APPLICATION:

1. They could not burn at a stake for Christ, but they must burn in hell for sin.
2. They must die another death after their natural death; the agonies & terrors of the first death will consign them over to the far greater terrors & agonies of eternal death, to die and to be always dying.
3. This misery will be their proper part and portion, what they have justly deserved, what they have in effect chosen, & what they have prepared themselves for by their sins. Thus the misery of the damned will illustrate the blessedness of those that are saved, & the blessedness of the saved will aggravate the misery of those that are damned.⁷

⁷ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, Logos Library System.

10. The new Jerusalem, (21:9-22:5)

1) It's heavenly arrival, (21:9-14)

NOTES:

INTERPRETATION:

The City's Glory

⁹ **Then** (after seeing the eternal resting place of believers and unbelievers in general), **one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife,** (the church saints by describing the holy city)."

¹⁰ **And he carried me away in the Spirit** (from the Great White Throne courthouse), **to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great** (and new), **city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven** (directly), **from God** (being prepared by God for His children),⁸

¹¹ **having** (or possessing), **the glory** (or splendor), **of God**, (in its brilliance). **Her light** (or illumination), **was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone** (probably a diamond or very similar), **clear as crystal**, (reflecting its brilliant colors).

The Number of City Gates

¹² **Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates,**

The Guardians of the City Gates

and twelve angels at the gates (one at each gate),

The Names of the City Gates

and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:⁹

The Arrangement of the City Gates

¹³ **three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west,** (the city was square with three gates on each side).

⁸ This is a literal city as we will see that it has physical materials, dimensions, architectural style, inhabitants, agriculture, events, guards, rules, a Leader, etc.

⁹ This is an entirely different situation from the earthly Jerusalem in the Millennium. But if the names of the gates corresponded to the millennial Jerusalem described in Ezekiel 48:31-34, the north side from east to west would have the gates named Levi, Judah, and Reuben. On the west side from north to south were Naphtali, Asher, and Gad; on the south side from east to west, Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun; and on the east side from north to south, Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan. In contrast to Revelation 7:5-8, where Dan is omitted and Joseph and Manasseh are included, Ezekiel mentioned Dan but not Manasseh. (Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Logos Library System)

 **INTERPRETATION:****The City's Foundation**

¹⁴ **Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations** (either in sections or layers), **and on them were the names of the twelve apostles** (cf., Matt. 10:1-4; Acts 1:26), **of the Lamb.**

The City's Dimensions

¹⁵ **And he** (the angel), **who talked with me had a gold reed** (which would be about ten foot long), **to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.**

¹⁶ **The city is laid out as a square** (so it would either be a cube or a pyramid); **its length is as great as** (or equal to), **its breadth.** **And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs**, (somewhere between 1,400 and 1,500 miles long [about 2,250,000 square miles]).¹⁰ **Its length, breadth, and height are equal**, (between 1,400 and 1,500 miles each way).

¹⁷ **Then he measured its wall** (the wall was is either lower than the city or this would be its width): **one hundred and forty-four cubits** (216 feet), **according to the measure of a man** (which would be about 18 inches per cubit), **that is** (even though it was measured), **of an angel**, (human measurements were used).

The Material of the City Walls

¹⁸ **The construction of its wall was of jasper** (crystal, like the diamond); **and the city** (itself), **was pure gold**, (translucent), **like clear glass.**

¹⁹ **The** (twelve), **foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones:**¹¹ **the first foundation was jasper** (crystal, like the diamond), **the second sapphire** (blue), **the third chalcedony** (sky-blue mixed with specks or layers of other colors), **the fourth emerald** (bright green),

²⁰ **the fifth sardonyx** (red and white stripes), **the sixth sardius** (ranges from orange-red, to brownish-red, to blood-red), **the seventh chrysolite** (a gold or yellowish tone), **the eighth beryl** (ranges from bright green, to golden yellow, to light blue), **the ninth topaz** (yellow or a yellow-green color), **the tenth chrysope** (apple green), **the eleventh jacinth** (red or reddish-brown), **and the twelfth amethyst**, (ranging from a faint purple to an intense purple).

The Material of the City Gates

²¹ **The twelve gates were** (carved out of), **twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl**, (remember the wall is either 216 feet or 1,400 to 1,500 miles high).

¹⁰ The city could almost stretch from London to New York.

¹¹ The list of the twelve stones in verses 19 and 20 has no necessary mystical meaning. "The writer is simply trying to convey the impression of a radiant and superb structure" (Moffatt). The twelve gems do correspond closely (only eight in common) with the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:17-20; 39:10ff.; Ezek. 28:13; Is. 54:11ff.). Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Logos Library System.

The Material of the City Streets

And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass, (just like the buildings).

3) It's glories within, (21:22-27)

INTERPRETATION:

The Absence of a City Temple

²² **But I saw no temple** (to worship God), **in it** (in the Holy City), **for** (or because), **the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple**, (the entire city is indwelt with their presence, the entire city is a place of worship—the secular and the sacred are indistinguishable, [there is no separation of church and state here!]).

F APPLICATION:

Buildings, the order of service, the form of church government, nor the ministries in the church constitute a church. What constitutes a church is if the presence of our God and Savior is there. Without Him there can be no real church, with Him, you can have church anywhere with much or little else.

The Absence of a Sun or Moon over the City

²³ **The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it** (to give it light), **for** (the reason being), **the** (Shekinah, [Isa. 60:19, 20]), **glory of God illuminated it** (the entire city—with unimaginable splendor as it passed through the translucent gold and gems).¹² **The Lamb** (Jesus Christ), **is its light**.

²⁴ **And the nations of** (or peoples represented by), **those** (Gentiles), **who are saved** (redeemed through saving faith in Christ), **shall** (one and all), **walk in its light** (enjoy its splendor as distinct ethnic groups, yet as equals with the Jews), **and the kings of the earth** (in the same way), **bring their glory and honor into it**, (*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...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.* [Eph. 2:10; 5:27]).

The Hours of the City Gates

²⁵ **Its** (twelve), **gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there** [thus they will never be shut—as God neither sleeps nor slumbers, neither will His people]).

Those Who Obtain Access through the City Gates

²⁶ **And they** (the redeemed), **shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it**, (being themselves the inheritance of God, [Eph. 1:11]).

¹² (1) supernatural, emanating from God (as in the Shekinah glory, in the pillar of cloud and in the Holy of Holies, e.g., Ex. 16:10; 25:22), Luke 2:9; Acts 22:11; Rom. 9:4; 2 Cor. 3:7; Jas. 2:1; in Tit. 2:13 it is used of Christ's return, “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (R.V.); cp. Phil. 3:21 (Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Logos Library System.)

Those Who Do Not Obtain Access through the City Gates

²⁷ **But** (in contrast), **there shall by no means** (whatsoever), **enter it anything that defiles** (spawns or causes impurities, sin), **or causes an abomination** (false worship, idolatry), **or a lie** (false information), **but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life**, (only believers will be able to enter the Holy City).

F APPLICATION:

Oh, how little do we know our God! How small is our widest thought of Him! Do we not see this great Bible He has given us going right forward against all obstacles, over all mountains, through all valleys, yea, to Gethsemane and Calvary—to come to this sweet, eternal consummation, *that God may be WITH MEN, THEIR GOD?* that He may wipe every tear from their eyes, that He may banish into the far forgotten past, mourning, crying, and pain, and say, "*Behold, I make all things new*"? For GOD IS LOVE!¹³

¹³ Newell, *The Book of The Revelation*, p. 347.