

INTRODUCTION:

Part-10 provided insight into the last set of seven visions in the seven sets of seven visions found in Revelation. The focus was on Jesus' return, the 1,000 years of His reign on earth between the first and second resurrections, and the judgment before the throne of God. We learned in Part-10 that there will surely be consequences for our choices in life, that God will one day destroy the earth and heavens as we know them, and He will create a new and perfect place for the faithful to live for all eternity.

Part-11 will provide a very detailed description of the New Jerusalem where God's faithful will live forever and ever. This description will be introduced and described in Revelation 21:9 through 22:5. This description is the basis for people's understanding of heaven as a place with streets paved with gold, for we will hear described an enormous golden city where God resides with His people.

Revelation 21:9, states: ***“And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”***” As we have previously discussed, the “bride” of the Lamb is the Body of Christ, those who have made themselves pure through the blood of Christ. Revelation 19:7-8 have given us this insight, saying, ***““Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”*** The New Jerusalem is more than a city, but the place where God will reside for all eternity. Also note the use of the word “wife” of the Lamb. In Revelation 19:7-10 we heard that the “marriage” of the Lamb had come and that His “bride” had prepared herself. The use of the word “wife” indicates that the marriage is concluded and that the “bride” and the “Lamb” are now joined in marriage.

Revelation 21:10-11, states: ***“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.”*** John was “in the Spirit” when he saw his first vision of the Lord (1:10). John was also “in the Spirit” when he was taken up to heaven to see the things that would take place in the future (4:2). And John was “carried away in the

Spirit” to see the vision of the harlot sitting on the scarlet beast in the wilderness (17:3). In all these cases, John is being taken to be shown something he could not see in his physical life, but only “in the Spirit” or through the Spirit. John is being shown something that either does not yet exist, or exist only in a heavenly place beyond the boundaries of our physical world and time. The fact that it sits on a “great and high mountain” would indicate that it is a high and mighty place. The fact that it is described as “coming down out of heaven” indicates that it is a creation of and comes from God.

Regarding the reference to the city “having the glory of God” and “brilliance like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper,” both of these references illustrate that the city will be extremely “pure.” Precious stones that are considered very “clear” are considered very “pure.” They shine with exceptional “brilliance.” In the ancient world, and still today, the greater the clarity (clearness) of a precious stone, the purer it is considered to be.

Revelation 21:12, states: ***“It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.”*** The “it” obviously refers to the New Jerusalem. The city is surrounded or enclosed in a “great and high wall” and has “twelve gates” with an angel stationed at each gate. We are told names were written on “them,” but it is not made clear if “them” is in reference to the gates or the angels. Most presume the “gates” are named with the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. In ancient Jerusalem the gates in the wall that surrounded the temple each had names, so it is logical that the gates are named. But the names could also apply to the angels with the understanding that each of the tribes of Israel may have been assigned an angel to look over them. Perhaps the angels that look over the gates are the same as those who looked over the sons of Israel. The names on the gates would therefore include: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Genesis 35:23-26). The significance of the twelve gates bearing the names of the sons of Israel may be that we all enter into God’s presence through the descendants of Israel. Ezekiel 48:30-35 also describes a city with three gates on each side bearing the names of the tribes of Israel. The vision of the city and division of the land in Ezekiel’s vision may be of the earthly camp of the saints which exists for 1,000 years before the coming of the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:13, states: ***“There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.”*** The number “three” is symbolic for God’s holy Trinity, and is therefore God’s number. God’s gates face east, north, south and west, or in all directions. Perhaps this is symbolic of the fact that God receives people from all directions or places. The gates are named beginning with the “east” gate and progressing to the “west” gate. This is similar to our understanding that Christ comes from the east moving to the west. God seems consistent in everything, even in the order in which He describes His city.

Revelation 21:14, states: ***“And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*** As the gates bear the name of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel through which we enter, the city’s walls are built upon twelve foundations that bear the names of the twelve apostles. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16:18, ***“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”*** And Peter will declare to those who follow Christ, saying, ***“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”*** (1 Peter 2:5). Jesus came bearing witness of the “good news” and instructed His disciples to bear witness of His teachings, saying to them, ***“...you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth”*** (Acts 1:8). Jesus is the foundation stone and cornerstone of our faith, and His apostles were the first layer of living stones upon which His mighty Church would be built.

Revelation 21:15, states: ***“And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.”*** The literal Greek translation of a “gold measuring rod to measure” would be “a gold measure reed in order that he might measure.” The word “reed” could also be translated as “cane” or “stalk.” It was a “reed” that was first placed in Jesus’ hand and then used to beat Him by the guards who mocked Him prior to His crucifixion. The straight and stiff “reed” was used for many purposes in Jesus’ time. In this case, a reed of gold will be used as a measuring device to measure the city and its gates and wall.

Revelation 21:16, states: ***“And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.”*** The city of New Jerusalem is enormous in size, 1,500 miles long and wide and high. This is calculated from the Greek “twelve thousand stadia” with one stadion equaling approximately 600 feet. The proportions of the city are that of a “cube,” the length and width and height are “equal.” The only similar reference I could find in Scripture was of the “square” size of the “city” in the midst of the land God will give to His people. The size is stated to be 4,500 in length with the north, south, east and west sides being the same (Ezekiel 48:16). The unit of measure is not given, but is reflected in most Bible as “cubits” or “reeds.” In either case, this city seems much smaller than the New Jerusalem described in Revelation. The scale of the city also would require a “new creation” because the current land of Israel is too small to contain such an enormous city.

Revelation 21:17, states: ***“And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.”*** The actual Greek measure is “one hundred forty-four cubits.” We should note that the number 144 is the sum of twelve times twelve, or twelve squared. Therefore, even the wall thickness reflects the symmetry of the city. It is interesting that we are told that the “human” measurements are also “angelic” measurements. It is uncertain what this might intend to imply, but it could simply mean that now humans and angels share the same standards.

Revelation 21:18, states: ***“And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.”*** The city wall is made of jasper. In 21:11 we were told the city appeared as “a stone of crystal-clear jasper,” which would imply a very “pure” jasper stone devoid of blemishes or imperfections. The “jasper” stone is first mentioned in Revelation 4:3 when we are told that God, sitting on His throne, was ***“like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance.”*** The “jasper” stone was also the last of the stones listed in Exodus 28:17-20 of the twelve stones placed on the breast plate of the high priest. In Exodus, the twelve stones are seen to represent the twelve sons who form the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelfth is seen to represent Benjamin who was born last as found in Genesis 35:18. The birth order of the first eleven sons of Jacob (Israel) can be found in Genesis 29:32—30:24. The significance of the “jasper” is that it is associated

with the twelfth and final son and tribe of Israel, and it is the first stone listed in Revelation 21:19. Because Jesus told Peter (stone) that He was the rock (bed-rock) on which He would build His Church, and because 21:14 above states that the “foundation stones” bear the names of the “twelve apostles of the Lamb,” many equate Peter with the first foundation stone of jasper. Therefore it is the “jasper” that connects the Old Testament foundation of the “twelve tribes of Israel” to the New Testament foundation of the “twelve apostles.” They are the bed-rock of the Church, the Bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:19-20, states: *“The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoptase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.”* The list of precious stones is substantially the same as the list of stones decorating the breast plate of the high priest given in Exodus 28:17-21 and 39:10-14. Apparent differences are largely due to fact Exodus is written in Hebrew and Revelation in Greek, and the Hebrew and Greek names for some stones are different. The order in which the stone are listed is definitely different. As discussed in 21:18 above, the “jasper” stone is listed last of the stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel, but is listed first in Revelation when representing the twelve apostles (21:14). The names of the twelve apostles of Christ are listed in Matthew 10:2-4 with Peter listed first listed first and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ, listed last. Judas would not be included in the final twelve and many scholars believe that Paul would be the most likely replacement, but according to Acts 1:26, the eleven apostles replaced Judas with Matthias, selecting him through the casting lots. The twelve precious stones could also have an additional meaning because according to the ancient Jewish writers Philo and Josephus, the twelve stones on the high priest’s breastplate were also equated with the twelve signs of the zodiac. While the listing of the stones is significant, the meaning behind their listing is a mystery we may not be able to resolve. Some speculate that the shift from the stones being associated with the twelve tribes of Israel to the twelve apostles is intended to imply that the faithful Christians are now the true Israel. Considering the astrological reference provided by Philo and Josephus, then

Daniel's words regarding the time of the end have new significance. Daniel 12:3 states: ***“And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*** Daniel may be referencing the apostles as those who lead the many to righteousness and are now brightly shining stars. On the other hand, Isaiah 54:11-12, speaking of the future Zion provides a description filled with references to precious stones, saying, ***“O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones.”*** Perhaps our ultimate understanding should be that we enter the New Jerusalem through the gates of the twelve tribes of Israel, but it is built on the foundation of Christ's twelve apostles.

Revelation 21:21, states: ***“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”*** While Isaiah 54:12 described the gates to be of “crystal” (literally “carbuncles” in original Hebrew), the Jewish Talmud, professedly based on the verse in Isaiah, states that the gates of the New Jerusalem would be composed of single precious stones and pearls each thirty cubits (45 feet) square. It is incredible to think of a gate, perhaps 45 feet square being formed of a single pearl. Only God could create such a magnificent city. Regarding the streets of pure gold like transparent glass, we do not know if the streets are truly transparent or this is a reference to their purity. In ancient times pure glass was very rare being milky and filled with impurities. The term “transparent glass” could simply mean that the gold is absolutely pure, but it could also mean that the gold is transparent. We will have to wait until we get there to know for sure.

Revelation 21:22, states: ***“And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.”*** Jesus said to those who asked for a sign, saying, ***“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”*** (John 2:19). Of course Jesus was talking about His body and pending death and resurrection, but those listening believed He was talking about the temple that had taken forty-six years to build. Clearly, Jesus did not see God residing in buildings but the human heart. The Church is the Body of Christ, comprised of those who believe in Christ rather than one or many buildings. In Revelation 3:12, speaking to those who overcome in the church in Philadelphia, He said,

“I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.” Again, this is an indication that God will no longer live in temples made from brick and mortar but will dwell in the midst of His people who will be His Church. It should be no surprise that there will be no temple structure and that the ***“Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb,”*** will be the temple.

Revelation 21:23, states: ***“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”*** We might remember that in the beginning there was no light. Genesis 1:2-3 states: ***“And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”*** It is not until the fourth day of creation that God created the sun, moon and stars “to separate the day from the night” and to “govern over” the day and the night (Genesis 1:14-18). Jesus said, ***“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”*** (John 8:12). Jesus would teach His disciples, saying, ***“You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:14a, 16). The apostle John would testify regarding the light, saying, ***“And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all”*** (1 John 1:5). The truth is simple and extraordinary. God has always been the one and only light from the very beginning, but has shared and imparted that light with us. God illuminates our hearts and our lives, and in Him we have life. God’s light outshines the sun and the moon and the stars, and in the presence of God no other light is necessary. In the New Jerusalem, God will be our light and will illumine our world and our lives.

Revelation 21:24, states: ***“And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.”*** This passage seems contradictory and confusing since we already know that righteous have been saved and the wicked judged. The nations and kings as we have previously understood them no longer exist. Some scholars believe that John is referencing Isaiah 60:3 and 11, which read respectively, ***“And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... And your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men***

may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.” Indeed, Isaiah may be referring to what we now see revealed in Revelation, but this may not be a contradiction. Let us remember that in the first vision of heaven we heard the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders give glory to God (4:5-11). The twenty-four elders *“cast their crowns before the throne,”* and said: *“Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created”* (4:11). We have been told that the saved include a *“great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues”* (7:9). We have been told that the saved include the *“small and the great”* (19:5). God has never required we lose our identity. Repeatedly, we are identified as peoples of many nations, tribes and tongues. We are a diverse group but we worship one God and are illuminated by one Light—the Light of God. And even the greatest among us, the kings among us, will give their glory to God, who created and saved us. We will forever give glory to God, for God deserves all glory.

Revelation 21:25-27, states: *“And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean and no one who practices abominations and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* Again we see references from Isaiah 60:11, speaking of the gates being continually open. There is no longer any night or darkness but only continual day because God’s light is continually present. The reference to “nothing unclean” or anyone “who practices abominations and lying” coming into the city does not mean they still exist. They cannot exist because everyone who’s name was *“not found in the book of life, was thrown into the lake of fire”* (20:15). I believe what we are hearing is an “assurance” that never again will anything unclean or abominable or any lye ever contaminate what God has now made completely pure. Satan and his deceptions are gone forever. Only those whose names are written in the book of life remain and they are “free” to enter the New Jerusalem anytime to give honor and glory to God. We can possibly surmise that our world will not be exclusively the New Jerusalem. There will apparently be a world beyond where people will live in nations—groups of like kinds.

If God has created us each unique, and allowed us to live as many peoples with different languages and traditions, why would He make us all the same in heaven? Perhaps God will forever allow us to live among our like kind, grouped together based on our backgrounds and traditions and even languages. But we will share in common our love for the Lord God, and we will all give Him glory for all He has done for each and all of us. Praise be to God!

The River and the Tree of Life

Contained within the New Jerusalem we are given a glimpse of a few details. Although the city is massive (1,500 miles cube) there seems to be only one street and one river, which flow from the throne of God, and one tree, which yields fruit and healing.

Revelation 22:1-2, states: ***“And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*** We were told regarding the great multitude that come out of the tribulation and are clothed in white, having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that ***“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat”*** (7:16). And then in 7:17 that the ***“Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life.”***

Regarding the “tree of life,” it is first mentioned in Genesis 2:9 as being in the Garden of Eden. We were told in Genesis 3:22 that those who eat from it will live forever. But when Adam and Eve sinned and eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, God removed them from the garden and from the tree of life by a ***“flaming sword which turned in every direction”*** (Genesis 3:24). And then in Revelation 2:7, the church of Ephesus was told that for those who overcome, God ***“will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”*** Now the promises of God are fulfilled. Those who have put their faith in the Lord will never again thirst or be hungry for God will provide for them forever. I am reminded of Jesus’ words in John 6:35, saying, ***“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”***

Regarding the apparently single street, in the middle of which is the throne of God and of the Lamb, it seems impossible that there could be but one street in the New Jerusalem. But Jesus said to us: ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”*** The word “way” in Greek literally means “way, path or road in which one travels.” There is only one way to eternal life and that is through and to Jesus Christ. We must heed Jesus’ warning found in Matthew 7:13-14, saying, ***“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.”*** Unfortunately, most will chose the “way” of the world rather than the “way” that leads to eternal life with Christ. Let us chose the narrow gate and live, and let us lead others down this path.

Regarding “leaves” for “healing of the nations,” Ezekiel 47:12 speaks of water flowing from the temple which waters trees along its bank that bear fruit monthly and have leaves that heal. Ezekiel speaks of many trees and not just one. Leaves are normally for collection of sunlight and creation of oxygen from carbon dioxide. In the new creation they will be for healing.

Revelation 22:3-4, states: ***“And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bondservants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”*** The “curse” spoken of here began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned against God (Genesis 3:14-19). Regarding Adam, the ground was cursed and man would have to work in order to eat (Genesis 3:17-19). Regarding Eve, pain would be greatly multiplied in childbirth and women would be ruled over by their husbands (Genesis 3:16). And of course, both would die and return to the earth as dust (Genesis 3:19). And finally, mankind was driven out of the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life. Mankind would now be separated from God by sin, and because of sin, no longer be able to look upon the face of God. But Christ has paid the price for all sin on the cross, and through His sacrifice for us we are reconciled with God. In the end the curse is removed and we shall serve God and gaze upon His face again. We will bear His name on our foreheads for we will be His and He will be our Lord forever.

Revelation 22:5, states: ***“And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.”*** This verse summarizes what has already been declared above in 21:23-25, that there shall be no need of sun or lamp for the day or the night because the Light of God will illuminate the New Jerusalem. The verse also seems to fulfill the promise made to the church at Laodicea to those who overcome, saying, ***“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”*** (3:21). Just as in the 1,000 years on earth, now for eternity in the New Jerusalem, believers will reign with Christ forever and ever. It is important to note that we do not reign over Him but reign with Him, serving the suffering servant who came to earth as both servant and sacrifice. Jesus is our example and teacher. He taught us to serve the Lord who gave us life and saved us through His sacrifice, so we can have life eternally.

Summary:

Part-11 shows us with some detail the incredible and magnificent fulfillment of God’s promise to provide a place for us. Jesus told His disciples before leaving them, saying, ***“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”*** (John 14:2-3). In the end, God will be our light and will provide for all our needs. God will restore things to as they were in the beginning in the Garden of Eden. We will live in paradise with God never again to be separated from His presence. The New Jerusalem is the place God has prepared for us to dwell with God. It is beyond our imaginations and beyond our reach. We cannot earn it through good deeds or right living, but we can receive it through our faith in, and by taking up our cross and following our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

While we will someday see this magnificent city for ourselves, I believe most of us are more that curious of what it might look like. The image we have been given in Revelation provides the dimension of an enormous “cube” but certainly has some shape. We have also heard about twelve precious stones of dazzling color and translucent gold. What will the city look like? While through this study we have attempted to largely stay

within the confines of the Bible and the Scriptures it contains, I feel compelled to share a description and drawing from my late wife, Carolyn Rene' Dailey. She had a series of visions through which she was shown images for a purpose. In one of her visions, which she entitled, "City in the Clouds," she describes an enormous city partially obscured by clouds and high in the heavens nestled in a valley of clouds. Her drawing of the city is found below, and her brief description of the city is as follows:

*"It seemed cradled... gently held... like the clouds were loving arms supporting it. I stood admiring its magnificence, desperately trying to make out any kind of detail, but I couldn't... it was too far away. What I could see were colors, so brightly emanating from the city that they were almost blinding to look at. A rainbow of colors... and gold... translucent gold mixed with all the other colors... The city shone so brilliantly, it was as if it contained the source of all light. Jesus stretched out His left hand towards the city and said, **"This is your home."**"*



Photo and Quote from: "Tell All Who Would Listen" (pages 28, 30)

(End of Part-11)