

THE NEW JERUSALEM, THE CITY OF GOD (PART I): ITS DESCRIPTION REVELATION 21:09–23

Introduction

The new heavens and earth will have a capital city, a specific place where the presence of God will be centred and where the Lord Jesus Christ will live and rule the universe. Scripture gives us the city's name: it is the *New Jerusalem*. Actually Scripture gives several names by which the capital city will be known:

=> The New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2; 3:12).

=> The Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22).

=> The Holy City (Rev 21:2; 21:19).

=> Holy Jerusalem (Rev 21:10).

=> The City of My God (Rev 3:12).

=> The Great City (Rev 21:10).

What will the city be like? It is indescribable. How could anyone possibly describe the city of God and of Christ? Think of the stars in the sky, the billions and billions of galaxies scattered throughout the universe. Picture them for just a moment: the vastness, the enormity, the endlessness of the universe. Remember that God is the Creator and Force of the universe, the Sustainer of all things. He is the Intelligence and Power that made all things and keeps all things operating. How could human language describe God? How could human language describe the city where God's presence is centred and where Jesus Christ dwells? This is the problem that John had in trying to describe the New Jerusalem. The city and the presence of God within the city are so glorious that they are just indescribable. There are no earthly things beautiful enough nor valuable enough to be a part of God's city. Therefore, John did all he could: he used the most beautiful and precious things upon earth to describe the city. This passage tells us about the city of God. It tells us what God showed John, what God wants us to know about the New Jerusalem, the city of God, the city where Christ will live and where the presence of God will be centred in the new heavens and earth. Note how it stirs our hearts when we study this passage knowing that we shall be a part of so glorious a future. God has given us the wonderful privilege of being a citizen of God's great city, the wonderful city of Jesus Christ. This is *the description of the New Jerusalem, the city of God*. (See note *New Jerusalem*, Rev 21:2.)

- I. The last vision given to John (vv. 9-10).
 - II. The glory of the city (v. 11).
 - III. The city's walls: perfect security (v.12).
 - IV. The city's twelve gates (vv. 12-13).
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- V. The city's twelve foundations: the names of the apostles are inscribed in them (v. 14).
- VI. The city's shape and size (v. 15-17).
- VII. The city's materials: are precious and priceless (v. 18-21).
- VIII. The city's worship: is focused upon God Himself and the Lamb (v. 22).
- IX. The city's light: is provided by God's glory and the Lamb (v. 23).

I. *Revelation 21:09–10 Visions of Revelation*

This is the last vision that God gives John, and it is the most glorious of visions. God shows John the New Jerusalem, the great city of God that will be the capital city of the new heavens and earth in the recreated universe. Note who it is that God sends to take John to the city: one of the seven angels who had cast one of the bowl judgments upon the earth. There is symbolism in this: God has a message of warning for the earth — judgment is coming. But God also has a message of hope and glory for the earth: the New Jerusalem, the city of God's very own presence, is also coming to earth; and every person can live with God in the glory of that city. Citizenship is available to all if they will believe in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek to live in the city with God and His Son.

The angel carries John away in the spirit to a high mountain and shows him the glorious city of God. Eight descriptions are given.

II. *Revelation 21:11 The Glory of the City*

There is the glory of the city (v. 11). The glory is the very glory of God Himself.

“[The city] was clothed in God's glory — in all its splendour and radiance. The luster of it resembled a rare and most precious jewel, like jasper, shining clear as crystal”
(*The Amplified New Testament*).

The glory of God gives light to the whole city. God's glory is full of so much light and shines so brightly there is no need for the sun nor for any other heavenly body to give the city light. Just imagine the power and radiance of God's glory — so bright that it is more forceful than the laser beams of light flowing from the sun! It is the glory of God that gives light to the city.

=> The glory of God shines all throughout the city, the city actually shines and has a sparkling sheen to it.

=> The city shines like the green of a jasper, but it is as clear as crystal.

=> The glory of God glitters off the city as though the buildings are crystal clear — everything glitters in the most beautiful green of the jasper.

Thought 1. If you have ever walked in a mountain forest when everything is covered with ice from an ice storm, you have walked in the midst of a crystal ice palace. Everything

sparkles and glitters — the green needles of the pines, the bare branches of the trees, the small branches and trunks of the saplings, the bushes close to the ground, the leaves lying on the ground. As the glory of the sun strikes the mountain forest, the ice crystals that cover everything in the forest sparkle and glitter just like a crystal ice palace. This is one of the most beautiful sights on earth, a crystal ice forest. Imagine how beautiful the green jasper glistening off the ice crystals would be. This is a very faint idea of the sparkle and glitter of the glory of God throughout the crystal clear city of God.

***Luke 2:9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

***Acts 7:55** But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

***2 Cor 3:18** And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

***Psa 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

III. Revelation 21:12 The Great Walls of the City

There are the city's walls (v.12). The walls are great and very high. The idea is that of protection, of perfect security. When believers reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, they will be behind the walls of perfection. They will be secure from all the evil and enemies of the physical world.

***John 17:11** I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one.*

***2 Tim 1:12** That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

***2 Tim 4:18** The LORD will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

***1 Pet 1:5** Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

***Jude 1:24-25** To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

IV. Revelation 21:12–13 The Twelve Gates of the City

There are the city's twelve gates (v. 12b-13). Three things are said about the gates.

1. The gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon them. This symbolizes that the only way to come to God is through the Messiah of the twelve tribes, the Messiah of the Jews, the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture says, "Salvation is from the Jews" (Jn. 4:22). God sent His salvation, His own Son, into the world through the Jews. Therefore, the entrance into the Heavenly Jerusalem is only through the Messiah of the Jewish nation. No person can enter the heavenly city unless he comes through the gates of salvation provided by God.

John 4:22 "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."

John 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

John 6:67-68 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Heb 8:6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

Heb 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Heb 9:24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Heb 12:24 To Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

1 John 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2. The gates are guarded by twelve angels: this symbolizes that the entrance to the city is protected. No person is allowed to enter the city unless they are approved by God.

A person can enter only if he comes through the salvation that God gave through Israel, through His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. There are three gates on each of the four walls of the city, twelve gates altogether. Every direction on earth has three gates:

=> The east has three gates. => The north has three gates.

=> The south has three gates. => The west has three gates.

This symbolizes that everyone on earth is invited to enter the city. There is a wall that faces everyone in the east and everyone in the north, and everyone in the south and everyone in the west. And there are three gates facing everyone. Everyone on earth can enter the city. There is no discrimination or prejudice, no partiality or favouritism shown by God. All can come and live as citizens of the city. The only requirement is that they come through the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:35 But accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

V. Revelation 21:14 The Twelve Foundations of the City

There are the city's twelve foundations (v. 14). They have the names of the twelve apostles inscribed upon them. Note: the twelve apostles are clearly identified as the apostles "of the Lamb." This means that the foundation of the city is the testimony of the twelve apostles, the testimony that declares Jesus Christ to be the Lamb of God. It is the *sacrificial death* of Jesus Christ as the lamb of God that makes the city available people.

=> Unless Jesus Christ had died for man — unless He had taken the sins of man upon Himself and sacrificed His life for those sins — no person would ever be free of sin and made acceptable to God. No person could ever enter the city, for every person would still be bearing his own sins.

=> Unless a person believes in the Lamb of God, believes that Jesus Christ did sacrifice His life for his sins, that person is not acceptable to God. He will never be allowed to enter the city.

The very foundation of the city is the *testimony of the Lamb* declared by the apostles. Therefore, a person must build his life upon that testimony.

Eph 2:19-20 *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

1 Tim 6:19 *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

2 Tim 2:19 *Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."*

VI. Revelation 21:15–17 The Shape and Size of the City

There is the city's shape and size (v. 15-17). Three facts are given.

1. The city is square (v. 16). There is one side each facing to the east, north, south and west. Again, the city faces in every direction. Citizenship within the city is available to every nation, city, tribe, language and person upon earth — available if a person will approach the city through the salvation God Himself has provided for the earth.
2. The city is enormous and, as we would expect of the heavenly city, its size is beyond anything we would ever dream (v. 16). It is 1500 miles long and wide and *high*. It towers 1500 miles high! This is a total of 2,250,000 square miles or 3,375,000,000 cubic miles (almost four billion cubic miles)! Picture a huge space station that man might build in a century or two and orbit around the earth. If Jesus Christ delays His coming long enough, the idea that man might be forced to build a large city in outer space to handle the population has already crossed the mind of man. The God who created a moon to orbit around the earth and planets to orbit around the sun has created a city that is far more beautiful than any city man will ever build. It will someday descend from heaven to earth and be the capital city of the universe. God is going to reclaim the earth from all the evil that has engulfed it, and He is going to do the most marvelous thing: make the earth the centre of the universe, the place where His very presence will be centred. The earth will be the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the capital city of His rule and reign will be the New Jerusalem. What a glorious picture of the great salvation and sovereign majesty of God!
3. The thickness of the wall and gates is 144 cubits or 216 feet thick (v. 17).

Thought 1. The size of the city is large enough to take care of all who will enter it. There is room for all who will come to God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isa 45:22 *"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."*

Isa 55:1 *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."*

Mat 22:9 *Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.*

John 7:37 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."*

Rom 10:12-13 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,*

1 Tim 2:4 *Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

VII. Revelation 21:18–21 The Precious Materials of the City

There are the city's materials (vv. 18-21). We must keep in mind that in some cases the gems or precious stones that are mentioned in this passage differed from the valuable stones that we know today. The stones seem to be as follows. (Note the spectacular beauty and variety of colour in the city.)

1. The *walls are made of jasper*: a crystal-like rock that is green in colour. The crystal green walls sparkle with the most beautiful colour as the reflection of God's glory strikes them.
2. The city is made of pure gold, a gold that is as clear as glass. There is no gold on earth as clear as glass. Imagine a city many times larger than New York or Tokyo or any other major city being made out of pure gold, a gold so pure that it would be crystal clear. Imagine the dazzling gold colour of the New Jerusalem as the glory of God strikes it.
3. The twelve foundations are decorated with every kind of precious stone (v. 19-20. This information is gathered from William Barclay. *The Revelation of John*, Vol. 2, p. 273f.)
=> The first foundation is jasper: a green rock-like crystal.
=> The second foundation is sapphire: a sky blue spotted with gold (cp. Exo 24:10).
=> The third foundation is chalcedony: a green stone like the green on a peacock's tail.
=> The fourth foundation is emerald: a green, the greenest of all greens.
=> The fifth foundation is sardonyx: a stone that has different shades of colour, basically white with layers of red and brown breaking the white background.
=> The sixth foundation is camelian: a blood-red stone.
=> The seventh foundation is chrysolite: a shining stone with a gold radiance.
=> The eighth foundation is beryl: a sea blue or sea green stone.
=> The ninth foundation is topaz: a greenish-gold stone that was transparent (cp. Job 28:19).
=> The tenth foundation is chrysoprase: an apple green stone.

=> The eleventh foundation is jacinth: a violet, bluish-purple stone.

=> The twelfth foundation is amethyst: also a violet, bluish-purple stone, but more brilliant than the jacinth.

4. The twelve gates are twelve huge pearls. What magnificent beauty!

5. The streets are made of pure gold, but again the gold is transparent, as transparent as glass.

Thought 1. This is a staggering picture of beauty and variety. Imagine the fiery brilliance and splendour as the glory of God reflects off the glistening stones. The beauty is bound to be the most dazzling and staggering sight in all the universe. Do the stones and colour symbolize anything? There is bound to be at least this meaning behind such magnificent beauty: the heavenly city is worth any price to enter. It is priceless. No matter what a man has to sacrifice, he is a fool if he does not give up everything he has to enter the heavenly city of God.

Mat 13:44 *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*

Mat 13:45-46 *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”*

Mat 6:20 *“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Luke 12:33 *“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

Phil 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

1 Tim 6:19 *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

Rev 3:18 *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

VIII. Revelation 21:22 Worship Focused of God Himself and the Lamb

There is the city's worship (v. 22). There is no temple in the heavenly city, for both God and Christ are there. Their presence will be so manifested...

- that the very atmosphere will be heavy with their spirit.
- that every person will be filled with God's Spirit, perfectly filled.
- that every person will be perfectly conscious of God's continued presence.

No believer will be without the full and perfect knowledge of God's Spirit and presence. Therefore, there will be an unbroken worship, communication and sharing with God and Christ. No matter what service or work the believer will be performing, and no matter where the believer is serving throughout the universe, he will be in unbroken fellowship and communion with God. Therefore, there is no need for a temple and its ceremonies and rituals to pull the human mind into the worship of God.

John 4:24 *“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

2 Cor 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Phil 4:8 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

Rev 19:1 *After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.”*
(cp. Rev 19:1-7)

Psa 1:2 *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

IX. Revelation 21: 23 The City's Light, God's Glory and the Lamb

There is the city's light, the glory of God and of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 23; see note, Rev 21:11). ■