

THE HEAVENLY CITY

Revelation 21:2-22:5

Introduction

1. Longing For A Better Home:

- a. Throughout history, humanity has often expressed a longing for something beyond this world, a place of peace, security, and eternal joy. This longing is reflected in many cultures and religions, but it is most profoundly captured in the biblical narrative.
- b. The Bible speaks of a future city, a heavenly city, prepared by God for His people. This vision has provided hope and inspiration for countless believers throughout the ages.

2. Abraham's Search For A City:

- a. Abraham, the father of faith, embarked on a journey of faith, seeking a city with divine foundations:
 - 1) Hebrews 11:8-10 tells us that Abraham obeyed God's call to leave his homeland, looking forward to a city whose builder and maker is God.
 - 2) Hebrews 11:13-16 further elaborates that Abraham, along with other patriarchs, saw themselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, desiring a better, heavenly country. As a result, God was not ashamed to be called their God and had prepared a city for them.
- b. Abraham's journey was not just a physical one but a spiritual quest for an eternal home, a place where God's promises would be fulfilled in their fullest sense.

3. Our Shared Hope For The Heavenly City: Like Abraham, we today look forward to a city that is yet to come:

- a. Hebrews 13:14 reminds us that we do not have a lasting city here on earth, but we seek the city that is to come. This reflects our transient existence and the eternal promise that awaits us.
- b. Revelation 3:12 highlights Jesus' promise to those who overcome: they will become pillars in the temple of God, never to leave it, and will have the name of God, the name of the city of God, and Jesus' new name written on them. This symbolizes our eternal security and identity in God's kingdom.

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John is given a vision of this great city, filled with promises of comfort and warning. This vision is recorded in Revelation 21:2-22:5, where John provides a detailed glimpse of the heavenly city. As we delve into this passage, let us explore the beauty, glory, and eternal significance of the heavenly city.

1. The Great City (Revelation 21:9-21).

As we explore Revelation 21:9-21, we encounter a majestic vision of the New Jerusalem, revealed to the Apostle John by one of the seven angels. This heavenly city symbolizes the fulfillment of God's promises to His people. John's vivid description reflects the city's divine origin and the glory of God's presence, offering a glimpse into the eternal home prepared for the faithful, rich with symbolism and significance.

a. John is shown the holy city:

- 1) John is shown the city by one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of wrath (**Revelation 21:9-10a**):
 - a) The angel, who previously poured out God's wrath, now shows John the fulfillment of God's promise.
 - b) The angel offers to show John "the bride, the Lamb's wife," symbolizing the church in its perfected state.
- 2) He sees the great city, the holy Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:10b-11**):
 - a) Descending out of heaven from God (**cp. Revelation 21:2; Revelation 3:12**). The city comes down from heaven, signifying its divine origin and purity.
 - b) Having the glory of God, with light like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (**cp. Revelation 4:2-3**). The city's radiance reflects the glory of God, shining brightly and purely.

The imagery suggests the city may hover between heaven and the new earth. This might symbolize the union of heaven and earth in the new creation.

b. John describes the holy city:

1) Structure and Layout (**Revelation 21:12-14**):

- a) Great and high wall with twelve gates. The wall signifies protection and the perfect security of the city.
- b) Three gates each on the east, north, south, and west. Gates on all sides indicate access for people from every direction, symbolizing inclusiveness.
- c) Twelve angels at the gates. Angels guard the gates, highlighting the city's holiness and divine protection.
- d) Names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on the gates. This signifies the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.
- e) Twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles inscribed on them. The apostles' names show the city's foundation on the teachings of Jesus' disciples.

2) Measurements (**Revelation 21:15-17**):

- a) Angel measured the city, gates, and wall with a golden reed. The golden reed symbolizes the city's divine perfection and value.
- b) City laid out as a cube: length, breadth, and height each 12,000 furlongs (1500 miles). The cube shape signifies completeness and perfection, mirroring the Holy of Holies in the temple.
- c) Wall measured 144 cubits (216 feet), either in height or thickness. The precise measurements highlight the city's grandeur and divine design.

3) Construction Materials (**Revelation 21:18-21**):

- a) Wall made of jasper; city pure gold, like clear glass:
 - (i) The jasper wall symbolizes the city's beauty and strength.
 - (ii) The pure gold, clear as glass, represents the city's purity and the transparent nature of its inhabitants' righteousness.
- b) Foundations adorned with precious stones:

Jasper:

- Description: Jasper is an opaque variety of chalcedony and comes in many colors, most commonly red, yellow, brown, or green. It is known for its smooth surface and can have a multi-colored appearance due to various mineral inclusions.
- Symbolism: Often symbolizes endurance and protection, representing the strength and stability of the heavenly city.

Sapphire:

- Description: Sapphire is a precious gemstone known for its brilliant blue color, although it can also be found in other colors like yellow, pink, and green. It is a variety of the mineral corundum and is second only to diamond in hardness.
- Symbolism: Represents wisdom, purity, and divine favor, often associated with the heavenly realm and the throne of God.

Chalcedony:

- Description: Chalcedony is a type of quartz that is typically milky or translucent with a waxy luster. It can be found in various colors, including white, gray, blue, and brown. The chalcedony in biblical times was likely blue or gray.
- Symbolism: Often signifies calmness and composure, reflecting the serene and peaceful nature of the heavenly city.

Emerald:

- Description: Emerald is a green variety of the mineral beryl, valued for its deep, rich green color. It is known for its vibrant hue and clarity, although inclusions are common and often accepted as part of its character.
- Symbolism: Symbolizes rebirth, growth, and eternal life, fitting for the lush and thriving environment of the heavenly city.

Sardonyx:

- Description: Sardonyx is a layered stone made up of alternating bands of sard (a reddish-brown form of chalcedony) and onyx (white or black chalcedony). It is known for its striking contrast and banded appearance.
- Symbolism: Represents strength, protection, and courage, reflecting the fortified nature of the heavenly city.

Sardius:

- Description: Also known as carnelian, sardius is a reddish-brown variety of chalcedony. It is valued for its warm, fiery colors ranging from orange to deep red.
- Symbolism: Signifies warmth, passion, and vitality, echoing the vibrant life and energy present in the heavenly city.

Chrysolite:

- Description: Chrysolite, known today as peridot, is a gem-quality variety of olivine. It is typically a light green to olive green color and is known for its transparent quality and brilliance.
- Symbolism: Represents abundance and prosperity, highlighting the richness and splendor of the heavenly city.

Beryl:

- Description: Beryl is a mineral that comes in various colors, including green (emerald), blue (aquamarine), yellow (heliodor), pink (morganite), and colorless (goshenite). Each color variety has its unique charm and value.
- Symbolism: Signifies purity, protection, and eternal blessings, symbolizing the diverse beauty and security of the heavenly city.

Topaz:

- Description: Topaz is a silicate mineral that can be found in a wide range of colors, including yellow, brown, blue, pink, and colorless. It is prized for its clarity, hardness, and vibrant hues.
- Symbolism: Represents strength, clarity, and divine favor, mirroring the clarity and brilliance of the heavenly city.

Chrysoprase:

- Description: Chrysoprase is a green variety of chalcedony, known for its apple-green color and translucent quality. It is one of the rarest and most valuable forms of chalcedony.
- Symbolism: Signifies joy, happiness, and healing, reflecting the restorative and joyful nature of the heavenly city.

Jacinth:

- Description: Jacinth, also known as hyacinth, is a reddish-orange variety of zircon. It is valued for its fiery color and brilliance.
- Symbolism: Represents wisdom, protection, and spiritual insight, embodying the enlightened and safeguarded state of the heavenly city.

Amethyst:

- Description: Amethyst is a purple variety of quartz, known for its rich violet hues and clarity. It has been highly valued throughout history for its beauty and supposed protective properties.
- Symbolism: Signifies peace, tranquility, and spiritual wisdom, representing the serene and wise nature of the heavenly city.

Each stone adds to the city's splendor and symbolizes the varied and multi-faceted nature of God's people.

- c) Twelve gates, each gate one pearl. The gates made of single pearls highlight the immense value and rarity of the city's entry points.
- d) Streets of pure gold, like transparent glass. The streets' transparency reflects the clarity and purity of life within the city.

This city, beyond comprehension, is a vision worth contemplating.

As we explore Revelation 21:9-21, we encounter a majestic vision of the New Jerusalem, revealed to the Apostle John by one of the seven angels. This heavenly city symbolizes the fulfillment of God's promises to His people. John's vivid description reflects the city's divine origin and the glory of God's presence, offering a glimpse into the eternal home prepared for the faithful, rich with symbolism and significance.

2. The Glorious City (Revelation 21:22-27).

Revelation 21:22-27 reveals the Glorious City, illuminated by the presence of God and the Lamb. Unlike any earthly city, this eternal city has no need for a temple or natural light, as God's glory provides perpetual illumination. It is a place where the redeemed from all nations walk in divine light, and the kings of the earth bring their honor into it. The city's gates remain open, symbolizing unrestricted access for the righteous, while only those written in the Lamb's book of life are allowed entry, ensuring its purity and holiness.

a. Illuminated by the presence of God and the Lamb:

1) No Temple (**Revelation 21:22**):

- a) The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
- b) Unlike earlier descriptions of heaven with a temple, the eternal city itself is God's dwelling place.

2) Divine Illumination (**Revelation 21:23**):

- a) No need for sun or moon; the glory of God and the Lamb provide light.
- b) God's presence eliminates the need for natural light, fulfilling prophecies from Isaiah 60:19-20.

Reflects the promise of a new heaven and earth - cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1. The old creation has passed away, replaced by a new, eternal order.

b. Enhanced by those who enter it:

- 1) Nations of the Saved (**Revelation 21:24a**). The saved from different nations walk in its light (cp. **Matthew 28:19; Isaiah 60:3-9**). This signifies the universal reach of salvation and the diversity of God's people.
- 2) Kings of the Earth (**Revelation 21:24b**). Bring their glory and honor into it. The kings' homage represents the submission of earthly powers to God's kingdom. May refer to righteous kings like David, Hezekiah, Josiah or redeemed rulers who reign with Christ (cp. **Revelation 22:6**).
- 3) Open Gates and Eternal Daylight (**Revelation 21:25**). Gates never shut, no night exists due to the eternal presence of God's glory. The ever-open gates symbolize unrestricted access and the city's perpetual openness to the righteous.
- 4) Nations' Glory and Honor (**Revelation 21:26**). Added to the glory of God and the Lamb (cp. **2 Thessalonians 1:10-12**). The glory brought by the nations adds to the city's magnificence and honors God.
- 5) Purity of the City (**Revelation 21:27**). Nothing impure or deceitful shall enter. The city's inhabitants are holy and undefiled. Only those written in the Lamb's book of Life (cp. **Revelation 3:5; 20:15**). Entry is reserved for those whose names are recorded in the book of life, signifying eternal life.

The city is glorified further by the redeemed of all nations!

The Glorious City, as depicted in Revelation 21:22-27, embodies the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise of an eternal dwelling place for His people. Bathed in divine light and free from impurities, it stands as a beacon of hope and inclusivity, welcoming the redeemed from every nation. Its open gates and the honor brought by earthly kings highlight the universal reach and grandeur of God's kingdom. This vision invites believers to look forward with anticipation and to remain faithful, knowing that their eternal home is a place of unparalleled beauty and holiness.

3. Provisioned For Everlasting Service (Revelation 22:1-5).

Revelation 22:1-5 offers a vivid depiction of the eternal provisions made for the inhabitants of the heavenly city, emphasizing their everlasting service to God. This passage describes the pure river of the water of life flowing from God's throne, the centrally located tree of life bearing perpetual fruit, and the unending reign of God's servants. Together, these elements symbolize the continuous sustenance, healing, and intimate fellowship that characterize the eternal state of the redeemed, highlighting the joyous and fulfilling nature of their service to God.

a. The water of life (Revelation 22:1):

- 1) Pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb. The river symbolizes life and the sustenance provided by God.
- 2) It is promised to those who thirst for righteousness (cp. Revelation 21:6; 22:17; Matthew 5:6). This fulfils Jesus' promise to satisfy those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

b. The tree of life (Revelation 22:2):

- 1) Located in the middle of the street, straddling the river of life - The tree's central location emphasizes its importance and accessibility.
- 2) Bears twelve fruits, yielding fruit each month - The perpetual fruit-bearing signifies continuous provision and abundance. - Leaves for the healing of the nations. The healing leaves symbolize the end of suffering and the restoration of all things.

c. The reign of His servants (Revelation 22:3-5):

- ▶ Curse of difficult labor is no more (cp. Genesis 3:17-19). The removal of the curse restores the joy of work and service.
- ▶ God's throne is present, His servants serve Him - The eternal presence of God's throne signifies His everlasting reign.
- ▶ Servants will see His face, His name on their foreheads (cp. Matthew 18:20; Revelation 3:12).
- ▶ Seeing God's face indicates intimate fellowship, and His name on their foreheads signifies belonging to Him. - Eternal daylight from God's glory
- ▶ There is no night, as God's glory provides constant illumination.
- ▶ They will reign forever (cp. Matthew 25:21). The saints' eternal reign with God fulfils His promise of eternal reward for the faithful.

The city is designed for perpetual, joyous service to God!

The vision in Revelation 22:1-5 portrays a city abundantly provisioned for eternal life and service, showcasing God's boundless grace and the fulfillment of His promises. The pure river and the tree of life signify unending sustenance and healing, while the presence of God's throne and the servants' intimate fellowship with Him emphasize the profound joy and purpose of their eternal service. This passage reassures believers of the glorious and enduring nature of their future with God, encouraging them to remain steadfast in their faith.

Conclusion

1. Understanding the Figurative Language:

- a. John's vision is symbolic (cp. Revelation 1:1). The symbolic nature of the vision requires careful interpretation to understand the spiritual truths conveyed.
- b. Be cautious in interpreting the figures. While the imagery is vivid, it is important to focus on the underlying messages rather than literal details.

2. Envisioning Our Hope in Christ:

- a. Use the imagery provided by Jesus rather than our own imagination. The descriptions in Revelation provide a guided vision of our future hope.
- b. Let these visions comfort and encourage us as we anticipate the city to come. The promise of the heavenly city strengthens our faith and perseverance.

3. Remaining Faithful: Stay faithful as we await the heavenly city (cp. Hebrews 13:14; 11:10, 16). As we await this future glory, we are called to remain steadfast in our faith and conduct.

Let John's vision excite and encourage us to remain faithful until we walk through those pearly gates. Listen to these words:

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

“And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” - Revelation 22:12-17

Applications:

1. **Hope And Encouragement For Believers (Revelation 21:9-11):** The detailed and vivid descriptions of the heavenly city in this passage serve as a powerful source of hope and encouragement for believers. Amidst life's challenges and sufferings, this vision reminds us of the ultimate promise of a perfect, eternal home with God. It encourages us to remain faithful and steadfast, knowing that our future is secure and glorious in God's kingdom. The vision of the New Jerusalem descending from heaven, radiant with God's glory, assures us that God's promises are trustworthy and our hope in Him is well-founded.
2. **Striving For Righteousness And Purity (Revelation 21:27):** The purity and holiness of the heavenly city, where nothing impure or deceitful can enter, highlight the importance of living a life of righteousness and holiness. Believers are called to strive for moral integrity and spiritual purity, ensuring that their lives reflect the values and standards of the kingdom of God. This vision motivates us to seek righteousness and avoid anything that could defile our spiritual walk. It reminds us that our ultimate destination is a holy city, and thus we should live in a manner worthy of that calling, keeping ourselves pure and blameless.
3. **Embracing Eternal Service And Worship (Revelation 22:3-5):** The depiction of continuous and joyous service to God in the heavenly city encourages believers to embrace a life of worship and service here and now. Understanding that our eternal future involves serving God with joy and intimacy should inspire us to find fulfillment in serving Him in our daily lives. This includes using our talents and resources for God's glory, fostering a heart of worship, and participating actively in the life and mission of the church. The image of God's servants seeing His face and reigning with Him forever underscores the privilege and joy of serving Him both now and for eternity.

Questions:

1. What vision is John shown (Revelation 21:9-10)?
2. What does the city's light resemble (Revelation 21:11)?
3. What is the significance of the city's wall and gates (Revelation 21:12-14)?
4. What are the measurements of the city, and what do they signify (Revelation 21:15-17)?

5. What materials are used in the construction of the city (**Revelation 21:18-21**)?
6. What is unique about the illumination of the city (**Revelation 21:23**)?
7. Who will walk in the light of the city, and what will they bring into it (**Revelation 21:24-26**)?
8. What does Revelation 21:27 say about who can enter the city?
9. What symbolizes the life and sustenance provided by God (**Revelation 22:1**)?
10. What is the significance of the tree of life (**Revelation 22:2**)?

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