The Eternal Home of God’s People: The New Jerusalem
Revelation 21:9 to 22:5

After Jesus announced to His apostles that He was going to die, He uttered these comforting words, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 14:1–3).

The mansions Christ went to prepare for us are in the Father’s house, and where does the Father live but in the New Jerusalem, which is in heaven. We will someday live in that same city where God the Father and His Son now reside. While God is Spirit, meaning He is Omnipresent—that is, He is everywhere at the same time—yet there is a place He calls home; His presence emanates outward from His throne in that heavenly holy city, and the day is going to come when we will live there too!

What does the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, look like? That should be of interest to all of us for that will be our home for all eternity.

The Showing of the Holy City (21:9–11)

The announcement by one of the angels... “Then one of the 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.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God (21:9–10). It may seem strange that one of the angels charged with pouring out one of the seven bowls of wrath on the earth is now assigned to show the holy city to God; it was a city prepared for “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”; the bride is a reference to the Church (Ephesians 5:25–32).
John was carried away in the Spirit, meaning he went on a spiritual journey. In the revelation, John at times seems to be in heaven witnessing firsthand what is taking place. At other times he is on the isle of Patmos as a prisoner. Patmos is a rock-like island in the Aegean Sea; spiritually he is transported by means of vision to a great and high mountain where he saw that great city descending out of heaven where it will rest on a new earth (21:1–2).

*The appearance of God’s glory...* “...having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (21:11a); God manifests His glory as light. In heaven, the full expression of His glory is unlimited and unconfined; it will light up heaven and the holy city for all eternity.

God revealed His glory to Adam and Eve in the garden in the Shekinah light of His presence. He revealed His glory to the children of Israel as a glowing pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He revealed His glory in the tabernacle and then in the temple when a cloud of light descended so the priests could not even minister. He revealed His glory to Moses so that his face did shine and he had to wear a veil because the people could not look upon him. He revealed His glory on Jesus in the transfiguration so that His face shone like the sun. Radiating from the New Jerusalem is the blazing glory of God shining like clear crystal. In 21:23 we read, “The city had no need of sun or of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God illumined it. The Lamb is its light.” The prophet Isaiah wrote, “No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light, for you will have the LORD for an everlasting light and your God for your glory” (Isaiah 60:19).

John wants to describe this light as “like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (21:11b). A jasper stone is opaque, but this stone is not. The Greek word translated jasper (*iaspis*) is more like a clear diamond that shines like crystal; a diamond in a gold setting is appropriate for a bride on her wedding day and eternal honeymoon!

**The Size and Structure of the Holy City (21:12–17)**

*The gates of the city...* “Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west” (21:12–13). Before we explore the wall we will look at the gates; each gate contained the
names of the twelve tribes with an angel at each gate; this means that the OT saints reside in this city.

In verse 21 we learn “the twelve gates were twelve pearls”; each gate consisted of one vast pearl; in the ancient world pearls were the stones most valued; Jesus told the parable of the merchant who would seek the pearl of great price and when he found it, he would sell all his possessions to obtain it (Matthew 13:46); no stone was more coveted than a pearl.

The walls of the city... “The wall of the city had twelve foundations... Then he measured the wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The construction of its wall was of jasper...” (21, 14a, 17–18a). How high was the wall? It was one-hundred and forty-four cubits high; a cubit is the span from the elbow to the tip of your middle finger, about 18 inches; that makes the wall about 72 yards high or 216 feet; if you can envision a football field, which is 100 yards, the wall would be three feet short of three quarters of a 100 yard field.

The wall was made of jasper stone. As we already stated, there is much uncertainty about the meaning of the word translated jasper (iaspis), for a jasper stone as we know it is opaque, while verse 11 speaks of a jasper stone as “clear as crystal”; some see this as referring to a diamond, while others see a multicolored stone of rich sky-blue or green, or rose that has the transparency of crystal.

The foundation of the city... “The foundation of the walls of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first was jasper (diamond or clear), the second sapphire (blue), the third chalcedony (sky blue with stripes of other colors), the fourth emerald (green), the fifth sardonyx (red and white mixture), the sixth sardius (red), the seventh chrysolite (transparent gold), the eighth beryl (sea green), the ninth topaz (transparent yellow-green), the tenth chrysoprase (green), the eleventh jacinth (violet), and the twelfth amethyst (purple)” (21:19–21).

On each stone was written the name of one of the twelve apostles. Above the foundation on the gates of the city were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and on the foundation stones the names of the twelve apostles. The God who revealed Himself to the patriarchs is the God who also revealed Himself more fully in Jesus Christ; the God of the OT is the God of the NT; the saints of the OT are redeemed because they looked forward to the coming Messiah; the saints of the NT believed the Messiah had come in Christ; therefore, no one is missing
from either dispensation; they are all represented in the gates and in the foundation stones of the holy city.

_The dimensions of the city..._ “And he who walked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal” (21:15–16). The city is laid out in a square; all sides and all angels are equal; it is 1500 miles cubed—that is, 1500 miles high, long and wide. Is that a city large enough to hold all the saints from all human history?

Dr. Henry Morris, a young earth scientist theologian writes, “This kind of geometry makes it easier to understand how all the redeemed of all the ages could be living in a cube city. Although there’s no way of precisely knowing how many people will be there, one can make a somewhat accurate guess. It can be calculated. Of the total number of people who have lived between Adam’s time and our time is about 40 billion; then assume a similar number will be born during the Millennium, because of the conditions, and allowing another 20 billion who died before or soon after birth and never really populated the earth. It is reasonable to assume that a hundred billion men, women, and children could have been members of the human race, past, present, and future.

“The Lord Jesus made it clear that the vast majority will never be saved, right? If this figure is used, then the New Jerusalem would have to accommodate 20 billion residents. Also assume that 25 percent of the city is used for dwelling places of the inhabitants with the rest allocated for streets, parks, public buildings, etc.”

Then Dr. Morris calculates, “The average space assigned to each person would be one over thirty cubic miles. This would correspond to a cubic block with about 75 acres on each face” That is a cube of space 75 acres high, long and wide.

Another way to calculate was shared by Dr. F.W. Borren, an Australian theologian. He writes, “Now if you work it out, you have an area of two million, two hundred fifty thousand square miles; that is 15,000 times as big as London.”

Let’s picture what a 1500 mile cube would look like: the distance from Miami, Florida, to the tip of Maine is about 1500 miles; the length of every street would be one-fifth the diameter of the earth; so you would have millions of golden miles going in all directions.
What we are getting at is, there is plenty of room in the Holy City for all the redeemed from all time and you would not even have neighbors living right next door; they would be at least 75 acres away; most of us do not have that luxury of spacious living in crowded Orange County.

And remember too, in our redeemed, glorified bodies we will be able to travel to all areas of our mansion, whether we go up or down, and do so in a nanosecond, even as Jesus ascended into heaven and will descend to the earth. John tells us we will have a resurrection body like that of Jesus who appeared and disappeared and even went through a closed door. John put it like this: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2–3).

_The beauty of the city_… “…and the city was pure gold, like clear glass…. And the streets of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” (21:18b, 21b); can you imagine a city of pure gold, so pure it seemed like transparent glass; Josephus, the Jewish historian describes Herod’s Temple: “Now the outward face of the temple in its front lacked nothing that was likely to surprise men’s mind or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendour, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn away their eyes, just as they would at the sun’s own rays. But this temple appeared to strangers, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow, for as to those parts that were not golden, they were exceeding white.”

You might remember how the disciples were impressed with the beauty of the Herod’s temple, and they were wondering how a site so spectacular could be left “desolate” (Matthew 23:38; 24:1); while Zerubbabel’s temple was being lavishly remodeled and enlarged under King Herod with heavy plates of gold, the New Jerusalem will glow with streets and buildings of pure transparent gold and our eyes will behold its beauty for with our new eyesight, there will be no need to turn away.

The Spirituality of the Holy City (21:22–27)

_As to the place of worship_… “And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (21:22). There is no temple in our eternal home; up
to this point we would have to acknowledge there is a temple in heaven along with the altar and a golden censer with incense (see 6:9; 8:3; 14:14–20); when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and rests on the new earth, the temple is gone; there is no need for it as God will literally occupy by blazing glory the whole of the new heaven and the new earth; there is no need for a chapel, or a place of worship, or a house of prayer. Why? “For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”

This means that this city dwells within the temple which is the very presence of God and Christ; previously, there was a unique place identified as the temple of God where He resided, even though His presence filled all of heaven and earth; however, in the new heaven and earth, God has chosen to remove that temple and claim the new universe as His residence as His glory fills His new creation.

As to the presence of the Lord as light... “The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light” (21:23). There is no need for the sun or moon in this new universe for the glory of God illuminates it; there will be no need for light bulbs either, for “the Lamb is the light.”

As to the purpose of all things... “And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it” (21:24–26).

Some see this as a reference to the Millennium, but that cannot be for it does not fit the context; we cannot go backwards; we are still speaking of the new heaven and the new earth with its New Jerusalem as the eternal city of God’s people.

How then do we explain the nations that are present? The word translated “nations” is ethnae, and means “the peoples,” or people from all ethnic groups will be there.

What about the kings of the earth? There will be former kings and nobleman in heaven, but in the New Jerusalem their glory is gone; everybody is on the same level; there is no one ranked above another; there is no race of people superior to another; all racism is eliminated, all social strata are eliminated as the former rulers of the earth give up their glory and everyone gives total glory to God!
This verse also tells us, “Its gates shall not at all be shut by day (there shall be no night there) (v.25). Could this mean space travel? We are not confined just to the Holy City; we can exit the city through one of its twelve open gates and explore the new heaven; some believe there will be new planets to visit and to me that is not a far stretch; people today have signed up to take a one way trip to Mars; frankly, that does not interest me because there is no plan to get back on planet earth. Anyway, even if there was, Mars does not look like an exciting place to visit; but in the new heaven not only will there be spectacular new planets to visit, but when your vacation is finished you will get back home safe and certain.

Furthermore, there will be no sleeping in heaven, for there is no night; it will be a time of “rest from [our] labors” (14:13); the Puritan writer Richard Baxter wrote of this rest: “O blessed rest, where we shall never rest day or night, crying, ‘Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabbaths’; when we rest from sin but not from worship; rest from suffering and sorrow but not from comfort. O blessed day when I shall rest with God, when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising, when my perfect soul and body together shall in these perfect things, perfectly enjoy the most perfect rest. When God also who is love itself shall perfectly love me, yes, and rest in His love to me as I rest in my love to Him and rejoice over me with joy and singing as I rejoice over Him.” Heaven will be a time of rest, but there will be no time for sleeping, nor will there be any need for sleep; we will be like the energizer bunny that keeps going and going and never quits! Who wants to sleep when we can find our rest in the presence of our God!

As to the purity of all things… “But there shall be no means enter it, anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (21:27). While the gates are open, John is assured that nothing defiling, nothing abominable will enter the city; only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of Life.

The Supplies of the Holy City (22:1–3a)

The source of the river of life… “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb” (22:1). There are no seas in the new earth, but there is a river that proceeds from the throne of God; it has pure water; water symbolizes salvation; it symbolizes eternal life; it symbolizes being born again; it symbolizes the satisfaction that Christ can bring; Jesus said: “…whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give them shall come in him a well of water, springing up to eternal life” (John 4:14); again He said, “If any man is thirsty let him come to
Me and drink. He who believes in Me as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37–38). The psalmist said, “There is a river, the streams of which make glad the city of God” (Psalm 46:4). Flowing through the heart of the New Jerusalem from the very throne of God is the river of life.

The staples from the tree of life... “In the middle of the street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (22:2).

Literally, the text should read, “In the middle of the path of this river, on both sides of the river is the tree of life.” Get the picture: the tree of life is planted in the middle of the river and its branches reach out over both banks of the river. We first read of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9); this tree was a symbol of eternal life; as long as Adam and Eve could eat of its fruit they would live; once they sinned, they had to be removed from the Garden, and angels had to guard the entrance to the Garden so they could not return; once removed from the Garden the tree of life was planted in heaven and now exists in the New Jerusalem.

This tree bore twelve different fruits, a different fruit each month and its leaves were for the healing of the nation; why would one need healing in heaven where there is no sickness? The word for “healing” (therapeion) means therapeutic; it does not imply illness, but the leaves are meant to give you an extra boost in life; to provide an extra dose of energy; the fruit is for eating and the leaves are like vitamin pills; and both are to add to the enjoyment of heaven.

It is interesting to see how the phrase “tree of life” is used in Scripture. Proverbs 3:18: “Wisdom is a tree of life”; Proverbs 11:30: “The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life”; Proverbs 13:12: “Desire fulfilled is a tree of life”; Proverbs 15:4: “A soothing tongue is a tree of life.” And when we partake from the tree of life, it not only gives us eternal life with more zest and vigor, but also wisdom, righteousness, fulfilled desires, and a tongue that blesses.

The secret of its effectiveness... “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it...” (22:3a). No more curse! What a blessing; going back to Revelation 21:3: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”
The Servants of the Holy City (22:3b–5)

The plan to serve God... “...and His servants shall serve Him” (22:3b). Get a picture of heaven: God is on the throne and the Lamb is there and His bondservants are before them serving Him; that is us; we are His willing servants; what are we going to do? We will do whatever He asks of us; to be honest, I haven’t a clue, but for sure, heaven will not be boring; we will be busy doing something that not only will bring us joy but will please God as well!

The promise of God to His servants... “They shall see His face...” (22:4a). In Exodus 33:20, God told Moses, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me and live.” John writes: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18); Paul wrote: “He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15–16).

But in heaven things will be different; we will see His face! Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

The possession of God as His servants... “…and His name shall be on their foreheads” (22:4b). We saw this same expression concerning the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion in the Millennial Jerusalem (14:1). I don’t literally see God’s name tattooed on our foreheads; rather it is an expression of ownership; we belong to God; we are members of His family; we are totally secure in our heavenly home; no devil to tempt us, no fleshly nature to lure us into sin; rather we have been purchased from the devil by the blood of Jesus and we are now safe and secure in the arms of Jesus forever and ever! Amen! Hallelujah!

The position of reigning with God as His servants... “There shall be no night there; they need no lamp or light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (22:5). The key phrase here is, “And they shall reign forever and ever.” Not only are we going to serve God, we are going to reign with Him; in Revelation 3:21 we read: “To him who overcomes, I will grant to Him to sit down with Me on My throne.” We’ll be reigning and He will be serving us, He will be reigning and we will be serving Him; I don’t understand all of this, but again this thought ought to reinforce the truth that heaven will not be boring; we will not be floating around on a cloud, or wandering around trying to find something to do; there will be responsibilities to fulfill; there will be leadership to
provide; there will be worship to lift us up; there will be food to eat, there will be time for rest; but above all, heaven will be the place and the time when we will behold the face of God, which has heretofore been seen only by His Son Jesus and His angels who move around His throne.

Right now Jesus is at the right hand of God, instructing His holy angels to keep building those mansions; for when we leave this life, we are already assured a home in heaven; it will be in the Father’s house. Furthermore, we are assured that He will come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we shall be also. I find no message more comforting than that! Amen!