

Revelation 21: The Completion of the Revelation of God

The beast and the false prophet, Babylon, the great city, Satan, the dragon, Death, and Hades, and all those whose names were not written in the book of Life have found their fate. John's vision turns to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the wife of Christ, the church of the firstborn. The readers of John's revelation learn about the tree of life, the river of life, and the invitation of the Lord.

The Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-7)

Revelation 21:1-2

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

John's vision turns to one of a "new heaven and new earth." The new heaven and new earth are also spoken of by Peter in 2 Peter 3:13:

13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. 14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.

Peter calls the new heaven and new earth a place wherein dwells righteousness. The Hebrew writer made very clear that the new earth is a heavenly one and that God also prepared a city for them in Heb 11:13-16:

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. 15 And if indeed they had been mindful of that (country) from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better (country), that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city.

In keeping with the images of the entire revelation, John describes the new heaven and new earth as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Revelation 19:8, taught that the righteous acts of the saints adorn the bride. The "home of righteousness" and "righteous acts of the saints" fitly describe the church. Paul had called the church a pure virgin in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3:

2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.

In Ephesians 5:25-32, Paul also speaks of the church as wife of Christ.

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; 26 that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . . 32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

There can be no mistaking the fact that the church is the bride; and if the bride, then, the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, and the new heaven and the new earth. The spiritual nature of Christians and

the church transcend the physical earth and the physical heaven that pass away. The saints are not of that physical world. Jesus prayed in John 17:14-17:

14 I have given them your word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that you should take them from the world, but that you should keep them from the evil (one). 16 They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth.

In 2 Peter 1:3-4, Peter concurred with this transcending nature of Christians and the church:

3 seeing that his divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; 4 whereby he has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The extended metaphor of this present passage (Revelation 21) finds its exact counterpart in Hebrews 12:22-29:

22 but you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than (that of) Abel.

Once again, the metaphoric chain is taut: the church of the firstborn (Christ), is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and Mount Zion. The new heaven and the new earth is the church, the bride of Christ, when John wrote, now when we live, and for ever and ever. The church, the bride of Christ, exists now and in all eternity.

Revelation 21:3-4

3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God: 4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

The passage where the vision appears is in the past tense. The loud voice from the throne (who is God in verse 7) speaks in the present tense. The present nature of the statements reflects a condition existing as the voice speaks. Therefore, it is the bride, the church, as she exists on earth, of whom the voice speaks. The church in the passages that follows will have a present, yet transcending nature. The voice speaks of the church now and forever.

This transcending nature of Christians and the church receives emphasis from the great voice. That the dwelling of God is with men and that He will live with them repeats the last promise of the saviour while on earth. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said:

18 And Jesus came to them and spoke unto them, saying, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go you therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

It is interesting that the dwelling of God is with men, for mankind has generally thought the opposite: that we are going up to heaven to live there with God. The teaching of the gospel is extensive

and comprehensive, leaving no doubt that God lives with us now and forever. In Romans 8:9, Paul wrote:

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

He repeated the principle—God lives in us—repeatedly.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17: Know you not that you are a temple of God, and (that) the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

2 Timothy 1:14: That good thing which was committed unto (you) guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.

1 John 4:12-13: 12 No man has beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us: 13 hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

1 John 4:15-16: 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

That he will wipe away every tear also speaks of the church in its present but also its transcendent form. Even now when earthly troubles overwhelm the saints, they rejoice. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:6-7:

6 Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in manifold trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, (being) more precious than gold that perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ:

A few verses later in 1 Peter 1:8-9, he concluded:

8 whom not having seen you love; on whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 receiving the end of your faith, (even) the salvation of (your) souls.

Paul also wrote, in Romans 8:37-39:

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul describes how the love of God equips and strengthens us:

16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Christians and the church transcend death itself because of the victory of Jesus over death and the abolition of death as his last enemy. As in Revelation 20:6, Christians also overcome death:

6 Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The New Order (Revelation 21:5-8)

Revelation 21:5-8

5 And he that sits on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And he said, "Write: for these words are faithful and true." 6 And he said unto me, "They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcomes shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

The statement that the old order of things has passed away leads directly into the next statement by one seated on the throne, "I make all things new!" The previous verses show that the new heaven and new earth—spiritual in nature—replace the physical earth and heaven—material in nature. The Holy City replaced the great city, and the heavenly Jerusalem replaced Babylon. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, replaced the beast, the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy replaced the false prophet. The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

The Lord God Almighty destroyed the dragon. These are the changes made in detail in the course of the revelation. That God is so able to clothe the earth is clear from Hebrews 1:10-12:

10 And, You, Lord, in the beginning did lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of your hands: 11 They shall perish; but you continue: And they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a mantle shall you roll them up as a garment, and they shall be changed: But you are the same, And your years shall not fail.

The one seated on the throne, commanded John, "Write: for these words are faithful and true." The phrase, "these words are faithful and true," also appears in chapter 22:6 where it directly relates to the impending end of the revelation which is said to be soon taking place:

6 And he said unto me, "These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass."

In the very next verse (21:6), the one seated on the throne says in the present tense, "They are come to pass." That he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, echoes Revelation 1:8:

"8 I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "Who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

"They are come to pass," refers to the completion of God's revelation and the accomplishment of his eternal purpose in Jesus. Accordingly, Ephesians 1:9-10 taught:

9 making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him 10 unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, (I say,)

So it was that Jesus said, as the old order passed, on the cross in John 19:29-30:

29 There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "**It is finished.**" and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

John had heard similar words to *it is finished*—before in Revelation 16:17:

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "**It is done.**"

This occurrence of this statement followed the prediction in Revelation 10:7, which said:

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then **is finished** the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

Thus, what is done here and what must soon come to pass is the final complete revelation of God's mystery to be written by John, the last of the apostles and prophets. The concluding event of that great mystery was His Christ's victory on the cross, chronicled and described throughout these pages by John.

The message from the voice from the throne sets the great, concluding dichotomy of the revelation of God—they who overcome will receive God's great reward, and they who fail receive God's condemnation. For the righteousness, there is the spring of the water of life. They will be children of God. The fate of the unrighteous needs no explication other than Revelation 21:8:

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Nor does this list of ungodly acts need elaboration, for in it are all those sins that lead inexorably to the mark of the beast and the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

The Bride, the Wife of the Lamb (Revelation 21:9-14)

Revelation 21:9-14

9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: 12 having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are (the names) of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Previously, in chapter 17, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came to John to reveal the fate of the great prostitute, the great city, Babylon. Now we have one of those same angels coming to John and saying he would show him the bride, the wife of the lamb, which is in verse 10 is the heavenly Jerusalem, the Holy City. This study has already concluded repeatedly that the bride, the wife, the Holy City, and the New Jerusalem are one and the same. That these terms all refer to the church now and to come forevermore is evident in this passage. Once again, the Holy City comes down out of heaven; it is not earthly, for heaven and earth pass away. Although

John describes what he sees in material terms, the terms represent something essentially unlike their material nature. This is the very meaning of metaphoric and symbolic language.

The first statement in the description is a clear non-symbolic plain language statement, it “had the glory of God.” Insight comes from Hebrews 1:3-4:

3 who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become by so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent than they.

When one looks to the bride, the wife of the lamb, one finds this same glory of God. Jesus said in John 14:9-10:

9 Jesus said unto him, “Have I been so long time with you, and do you not know me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; how say you, ‘Show us the Father?’ 10 Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me does his works.”

Just as Christ reflected God’s glory so does the bride. What men should see is not flesh and blood, but the divine nature, as explained in 2 Peter 1:3-4:

3 seeing that his divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; 4 whereby he has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The next statement, *her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal*, is a simile. Once again, the bride reflects the bridegroom. John had written in Revelation 1:16:

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

The city had a high wall with twelve gates. The names of twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates, where stood twelve angels. The symbolism relates the heavenly city to those saints under the Old Testament law who brought the world to Christ. Israel of the world brought the world to the spiritual Israel. The metaphor begins with David who wrote in Psalms 24:7-10:

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in. 8 Who is the King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates; yes, lift them up, you everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory. (Selah)

Among others, Isaiah also spoke of the gates of the heavenly city in Isaiah 54:11-14:

Isaiah 54:11-14

11 O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of carbuncles, and all your border of precious stones. 13 And all your children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of your children. 14 In righteousness shall you be established: you shalt be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.

In a figure, it was through Israel and the law that the Lord brought us to Christ. In Galatians 3:23-24, Paul wrote:

23 But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 So that the law is become our tutor (to bring us) unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

And again in Romans 10:4, he said: "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believes."

Therefore, through Israel of the flesh all men had opportunity to become this spiritual Israel. In Romans 9:6-8, Paul wrote:

6 But (it is) not as though the word of God has come to naught. For they are not all Israel that are of Israel: 7 neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called. 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed.

The city also had twelve foundations and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Since there are twelve apostles with names on the gates, one might ask which twelve are they, and what of Matthias and Paul. Common in the gospel was the designation twelve apostles or twelve disciples. Paul designated the apostles and prophets as the foundation of God's household in Ephesians 2:19-21:

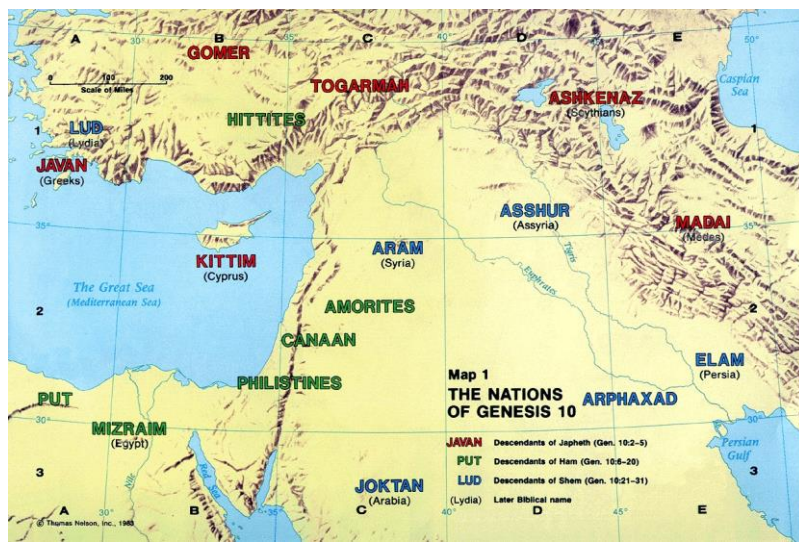
19 So then you are no more strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Measuring the City (Revelation 21:15-21)

Revelation 21:15-21

15 And he that spoke with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lies foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, (according to) the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18 And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

This is the second time for a measuring of the Holy City. The first occurred in Revelation 11:1-2 and excluded the outer court because the persecution of the Holy City, still going on. However, the temple of God, the



altar, and worshippers were measured. In the current passage, the trials and temptations are over; the bride, the wife of the Lamb is complete. It is finished. The angel will measure the Holy City in its entirety.

The angel measures the city, its gates, and its walls in an extended metaphor that speaks to the city's overwhelming greatness and beauty. The measurements are with man's measure, which illustrates the city's overwhelming proportions. The size of the city is magnified by the large numbers, when it is so measured. The city is a cube of equal width, length, and height: 1,400 miles each way. Each part of the city is laid with the most beautiful stones and metals. Peter reveals the mystery of this beautiful description in 1 Peter 2:4-10:

4 unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Because it is contained in scripture,

“Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious:

And he that believes on him shall not be put to shame.” [Isaiah 28:16]

7 For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve,

The stone which the builders rejected,

the same was made the head of the corner; [Psalms 118:22]

8 and,

A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; [Isaiah 8:14]

For they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But you are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession, that you may show forth the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 10 who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The very size of the city reflects a magnificence and munificence beyond comprehension. 1,400 miles cubed is approximately the size of the land mass settled by the descendents of Noah in Genesis 10. One must imagine that size cubed, as high as it is long and wide. The transparency of the street is the same image used for the surround, before the throne in heaven, in Revelation 4:6:

6 and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.

The Temple: the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (Revelation 21: 22-27)

Revelation 21:22-27

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. 23 And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did light it, and the lamp thereof (is) the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. 25 And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): 26 and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: 27 and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

That John did not see a temple confirms the spiritual nature of the Holy City. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of this spiritual city. The spiritual nature of the Holy City is

such that there need be no sun or moon for the glory of God gives it light. An earthly kingdom or city would need the sun and the moon. Verse 11 has already taught that the Holy City shone with the glory of God. Through gates that will never be closed, the glory and honor that once belonged to the nations will be brought into it. Finally, nothing impure will enter into it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful. Those who enter the beautiful city will be those whose names are written in the lamb's book of life.

The church, the bride of Christ, is now the transcending and are the eternal Holy City, the New Jerusalem.