

The Book of Revelation
Revelation 21 (NIV)
“The City of God”

A New Heaven and a New Earth

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 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. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Introduction

After the earth has been destroyed and all the wicked are judged and sent to hell, the apostle John is shown the new heaven and new earth that God will create for His people (**vs.1**). Unlike the planet we live on today, almost three fourths of which is covered by water, this new earth will have no sea. The ecology of this new planet will therefore be vastly different from anything we have experienced. Without oceans, there can be no hydrological cycle that produces rainfall. So, the earth will be reminiscent of the "Garden of Eden" era (**Genesis 2:5-6**), when there was no rain.

We can only speculate as to whether or not this new earth will be dependent on water as the basis of all life (currently our bodies are made mostly of water). Perhaps in our glorified bodies water will be unnecessary. However, we are told that the "River of Life" will flow from the throne of God into the Capital City (*The New Jerusalem*) of this new world (**22:1-2**). Whether this "river" is symbolic or a literal river has been debated by many. Suffice it to say that our God will design this new world to sustain life for all eternity, and our new home will be a paradise like we can only imagine. Our home, where we will live forever, will be *Safe, Sinless, Spacious* and *Spectacular*.

Safe

There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away... **Revelation 21:4**

When God establishes His new world, He will forever be among His people (**vs.3**). The first order of business is to wipe the tears from the eyes of His children (**vs.4**). I am certain that after we all witness the untold millions who will be sentenced to death at the Great White Throne Judgment, we will weep uncontrollably. We will see people that we care about, people who lived and worked along side us, who will not be allowed to enter the Kingdom. Unless God mercifully intervenes to remove this image from our memory and takes away the tears of sorrow, Heaven would be a very sorrowful place indeed.

Thankfully, the Lord will save us from that terrible pain, and once in the Kingdom, we will be kept safe under His watchful eye. Nothing will ever hurt us again. Painful things will be forgotten. The old order of things has passed away (**vs.4**). Never again will a parent know the anguish of losing a child, or a child feel the pain of losing a mother or father in death, for death is no more. **Verse 25** tells us that the gates to the Capital City will never be closed, for there will be no night there. Walled cities in Biblical times would close their gates at night to protect their citizens from thieves and invaders, but this type of security will no longer be necessary. God Himself will be over security. He will keep us safe.

Sinless

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
Revelation 21:27

The new earth with its Capital City, the new Jerusalem, will be inhabited solely by holy people. Not only will no one ever sin, but no one will even be capable of having an impure thought. We all will finally be perfect, as our heavenly father is perfect (**Matthew 5:48**) Not only will evil not exist in this heavenly kingdom, but there will never be any temptation to do evil. The tempter is forever banished into the lake of fire (**20:10**), along with all who lived like him. **Verse 8** gives us a litany of those who will not be allowed into Heaven:

- 1) **The Cowardly** – Those who were too afraid to take a stand for Christ due to fear of persecution or nonacceptance.
- 2) **Murderers** – Those who by deed or thought (**Matthew 5:21-22**) would bring harm to others in hatred.
- 3) **Sexually Immoral** – Those who reject God's standards for sexual purity. Adulterers (by thought or deed – **Matthew 5:27-28**), homosexuals, and all who engage in sexual behavior outside the bonds of marriage.
- 4) **Idolaters** – Those who love the things of this world more than God, along with those who practice any religion that seeks to enter Heaven by means other than the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
- 5) **Those who practice magical arts** – Not only things pertaining to the occult, but the Greek word used here (*Pharmakeus*) is the origin of the English word “pharmacy”. In short, there will be no drug addicts in Heaven. Everyone will be clean and sober.
- 6) **All Liars** – Dishonesty is despised by God (**Proverbs 6:17, 19**). Deceit cannot co-exist in the presence of the One Who is called The Way, The **Truth**, and The Life (**John 14:6**), and any who claim they do not need His forgiveness are the biggest liars of all.

Spacious

The City was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the City with a rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia (1,400 miles) in length, and as wide and high as it is long.
Revelation 21:16

I have always been an outdoorsman. When I first began to read about the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven, I would think to myself, “Oh great, we’re all going to live in a high rise apartment building”. But *after* further study, I began to realize that the New Jerusalem is merely the Capital City of the New Earth. John was taken to a very high mountain (**vs. 10**) so he could observe this massive city as it descends to the New Earth. The Good News for all us outdoor types...? There will be a whole New Earth complete with mountains (**vs. 10**) and new frontiers (Praise God!) for us to discover and explore! Heaven is sounding more wonderful all the time! Not only will there be plenty of sights and wonders to see, but the Lamb of God will be there to share it with us.

I am not sure whether or not all of us will live inside the city, but I do know there will be plenty of room. The city is a giant cube, 1,400 miles square, as well as tall. Imagine a building roughly the size of Australia that rises 1,400 miles into the heavens! It is interesting to note that this building would have more than enough room to house everyone who has ever lived upon the earth (approx. 106 billion). This gives a new meaning to the verse in **2 Peter 3:9...** **“He (God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”**. The Lord Himself designed the New Jerusalem to literally become a home for **“whosoever will” (Revelation 22:17)**. If only every sinner would come to Jesus for forgiveness, for there is plenty of room in the House of God!

Spectacular

When John describes the New Jerusalem for us, he is trying to describe the indescribable the best way he possibly can. Everything about this city is beautiful beyond description. The city walls are constructed of what John calls “pure jasper” (**vs. 18**). Jasper here is probably best understood as crystal clear, flawless, diamond. The walls of the city are clear, making the city radiate God's Glory from the inside out. The city itself will be made of translucent gold. See-through polished gold! We have nothing on earth to compare with this depiction of splendor. Suffice to say this massive city will shine like a beacon, as it lights up the world (**vs. 24**).

John also describes the city as having twelve foundations, each made of a different precious stone (**vs. 19, 20**). The names of the apostles are written upon the foundations to honor these great pioneers of the faith for their proliferation of the gospel. For it was these who first took the great commission of Christ to spread the gospel throughout the world. The twelve foundations most likely are outer edges of the city. Remember: a cube has twelve edges that surround it. It is possible that sparkling gemstones adorn each edge, giving the city the appearance of a large diamond outlined in multicolored precious stones. What an amazing sight this city will be.

The city will have three gates on every side (twelve in total) and inscribed upon those gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, for it is through Israel that the “door” to our salvation, Jesus Christ The LORD came. Each gate of the city is made of a single pearl (**vs. 21**). It is my opinion that our Lord chose pearls because of how they are formed. Pearls are made by clams. A pearl begins as an irritant (i.e. pebble or sand) that causes pain for the clam. The clam takes this painful material and layer by layer transforms it into something beautiful. Jesus, our “doorway” into heaven (**John 10:9**), endured the pain of the cross in order to give us something beautiful. We could never hope to inherit this great city had it not been for the cross. The Kingdom of Heaven is indeed a pearl of great price (**Matthew 13:45**).

Many people have speculated what life will be like in this amazing new world. I am convinced that it will be anything *but* boring. John says that the kings of earth (the “least” of those who will one day rule - **Luke 9:48**) will bring tribute into the city (**vs. 24**), and the nations will walk by its light. The word used here for nations (*ethnos in the Greek*) is better translated as “races”. All the races of the earth are united under the banner of Jesus. This verse along with **verse 26** leads me to believe that we will have very productive lives with jobs and activities. We will all serve in the kingdom, and the fruits of our labors will bring tribute to the King of Kings. **Verse 25** says there will be no more night there. It will be a great, meaningful life, in a beautiful place, ruled by a matchless King. In a word, life in Heaven will simply be “Spectacular!” What a wondrous life awaits those who have placed their faith in the King of this great and wonderful city!

Truth!