

The New Heaven and New Earth – 21:1-8

A Whole New World 21:1

- *Then I saw* – The next progression in the vision

+ *a new heaven and a new earth* – The heavens are the “above the expanse” [Genesis 1:6ff] portion, while the earth is everything below the sky. God is “*making all things new*” by going back to the very first things that he created [Genesis 1:1]. By itself, this doesn’t necessarily indicate that there was anything wrong with the first heavens and earth, but John explains that they “passed away” (see notes below).



This is also not a new concept, since Isaiah foresaw a new heaven and a new earth [Isaiah 66:23] as early as seven centuries before Christ. Isaiah also offers a good perspective on the heaven/earth duality here in the first verse of that chapter, explaining: “*Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool*” [Isaiah 66:1].

Peter points to this same fact, “*But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness*” [2 Peter 3:13].

The interesting thing in Peter’s words is that he points to both a new heaven and a new earth, but to a single home. That means that the two are not separate levels of the new dwelling place, but one, single unit of perfection.

- *for [they]...had passed away* – This is a clear reference back to Jesus words “*heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away*” [Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33]. As such, this is also a resounding reminder of the unity of Scripture that shows how the whole Bible is one, single unit, not a rag-tag collection of various writings. Now, it should be noted that when Jesus spoke those words he was pointing less to the end of the world than he was to the enduring nature of his Word, but nonetheless he indicates that this world has an end, an end which John was privileged to see, and which we witness through his words here.

+ *the first heaven* – Does that mean that the first heaven had sin? I don’t think so. Rather what God is showing by remaking heaven itself is again a testament to what we’ll see in just a few verses: He is making all things new.

+ *and the first earth* – This makes much more sense, since this is where sinful people have lived since the fall. However, this also makes much more sense as we see “heaven and earth” as a term for the universe, indicating— as has been mentioned several times —that God is simply making all things new.

- *and there was no longer any sea* – While there are a number of different views on what these words mean, I think it’s best to take them as a reference to “undoing” the second day of creation, when God “*made an expanse between the waters*” [Genesis 1:6]. The sky (or expanse) has always been a divider between the heaven above and the earth below...but no such division exists in the new heavens and the new earth. We are united with our God, our dwelling place is with him, and there is no need to buffer us from his glory. Also note how the sea separated Patmos from Ephesus by a span of less than 50 miles.

A New Jerusalem 21:2



- ***I saw the Holy City*** – This might seem obvious for us, but the Holy City is Jerusalem (as identified in the following phrase). What you may not have realized is that this is a common, but not overwhelmingly common phrase to refer to the capital city of Jerusalem. The first references in Scripture that I could find were both listed in the latter chapters of Isaiah [48:2, 52:1], and the second one, again, identifies this city as Jerusalem. ALL the other references to Jerusalem as “the Holy City” are post-exilic, meaning that they took place at least after the nation of Judah came back from Babylonian Captivity (586-516BC). There are only 10 other references across the Bible that speak of the holy city [Nehemiah 11:1, 18 (twice), Daniel 9:24, Matthew 4:5, 27:53, Revelation 11:2 (twice), and 21:10, 22:19]. The emphasis here is on the City, kinda like we might say “The Twin Cities, you know, the ones in Minnesota” this could be translated, “The City, the Holy one.”

+ ***the New Jerusalem*** – Unlike the old Jerusalem, this capital city is free from the sinfulness that plagued its gates and every one of its citizens. There’s a lot that is different, but what remains the same is the immediate association with God’s people and that this is the place where God’s dwelling is...in the old, it was at the temple, but in the New, that’s different too!

The second point of comparison here is to remember that God’s church became Babylon, the capital city of apostasy. She was once meant to be Christ’s bride, but essentially she left him at the altar in order to pursue a lifestyle of wealth, power, and security here on earth [chapter 18]. Comparing and contrasting the temporary, earthly rewards of Babylon with the eternal, heavenly rewards of the New Jerusalem will be one of the most important understandings of this chapter.

+ ***coming down*** – Mostly symbolic (God designed it, God built it, it’s coming from God in heaven), but also may be some literal fulfillment of what Paul spoke of “***God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him***” [1 Thessalonians 4:14].

* ***out of heaven*** – The place of perfection...as will be explored further in latter details, this perfection creates a stark contrast with the worldliness that had come to define Jerusalem and Babylon both.

* ***from God*** – Need I say more? If God is architect, builder, and deliverer, what could possibly be better?

+ ***prepared as a bride*** – We were introduced to the wedding feast picture in the previous chapter, where we saw the beginning of the church’s glorification as the marriage of the Lamb.

+ ***beautifully dressed for her husband*** – The excitement and anticipation of the wedding day gives both bride and groom something to look forward to. The dress that this bride wears has been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb [7:14, Isaiah 61:10].

God with his People 21:3-4

- *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying –*

The first time that we heard a voice “from the throne” was all the way back at 4:2. These messages all came from God and are therefore reliable promises on which those living in the seven congregations (suffering and persecuted) could look to for hope and peace in God.



+ **Look!** – This word is a Greek imitation of a Hebraism that often goes untranslated. It

happens to redirect the understood audience’s attention on a specific aspect of what is about to be explained. In this case, the specific direction is on how God is with his people (as is mentioned 5 times in the span of a single verse).

+ *God’s dwelling place is now among the people* – Immanuel now “sets up his tent” with us...but I thought that happened when Jesus came...and when the temple was built...and when the tabernacle was constructed...there is no more “tent” now we have a return to the permanent state of Eden.

+ *and he will dwell with them* – Isn’t this exactly what he just said? Not quite: the previous statement pointed to how his dwelling place is with people, much like the temple or the tabernacle showed in a temporary and partial way how God’s dwelling is with us...this statement explains how God is in that dwelling place and is with us.

+ *They will be his people* – These phrases point to the mutual belonging that we have between us and God. We belong to him because he has purchased us with his blood. But that belonging doesn’t make us inferior or “possessions” but rather elevates our status to the original position that God created us to have. The status of “child of God” that we lost in the Fall, was restored by Christ, applied at our baptism, and perfected in eternity. We belong to God, and that is a very good thing!

+ *and God himself will be with them* – No more representation, no more symbols. What the “himself” adds here is that it is God who dwells in this dwelling place...not an altar, not a cross, but the 3-in-1, the Almighty, God...he dwells there...he dwells with us!

+ *and be their God* – Perhaps the most incredible statement of all is that when Christ purchased us with his blood, not only did we become his...he became ours! The access to the Almighty was granted to us and can never be revoked!

- *He will wipe every tear from their eyes* – The way that he wipes those tears away is by eradicating every reason for those tears in the following list of things that will be no more:

- *There will be no more...*

+ *death* – separation from loved ones (including God) will never happen again

+ *or mourning* – the sadness of loss...no more: we are joined forever!

+ *or crying* – outcries or outbursts...no more: only calm forever!

+ *or pain* – the sadness of harm to our person...no more: we are whole forever!

- *...for the old order of things has passed away* – See the following verse

The Victory: All Things New! 21:5-8



- *He who is seated on the throne said* – I don't think this one needs explanation, but I'll just clarify that this is the Lamb who is seated on the throne, who removed the seals, whose blood bought us, and to whose marriage feast we have been invited (as the bride, no less!) God is announcing this news, which means it's assured to happen.

+ *I am making everything new!* – Becker hits the nail on the head with this one:

In those words God reminds John and us that the conquest of death and pain and sorrow is his work. When modern scientists and theologians speak of the "renewal of society" and the "building of a perfect social order" as the task to which science and government and the church should devote themselves, they forget that such a perfect world can come only when the present order of things is destroyed and a new heaven and a new earth are brought into being by God himself. The present world labors under the curse of sin and must perish to make room for the new order of things, which will be brought into being not by human effort and ingenuity but only by the almighty power of God. The task of the church, therefore, is not to build a perfect social order, but to proclaim the gospel promises through which men will come to share in the new order of things which God will make. –Becker, 331

- *Then he said*

+ *Write this down* – God commanded John to write the words that we have before us. Both a reminder of verbal inspiration and to the fact that God wants a record of this account kept and remembered. This is not news to be kept secret, but rather to be embraced, spread, and handed down to those who have not yet heard. This is not a new command [1:19; 2:1,8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9], though it should be noted that only 4 such commands have been made outside of the brief letters specifically addressed to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3.

+ *for these words are trustworthy and true* – In a certain sense, this goes without saying, but by saying it, God is reaffirming that his promises (some of which John has just finished revealing, more of which are soon to come) are reliable, and contain no falsehoods. The Word of God contains everything that we need to know about him. This is the reason that God has revealed his Word to us, let us cherish and spread that Truth.

- *he said to me* – Words directed to John, presumably like someone who's taking down dictation. These are words that God himself wants to be highlighted and emphasized.

+ *It is done.* – While we might think of Jesus' words from the cross "It is finished" the concept here differs slightly. God had said "I am making (present tense) all things new"

+ *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End* – These two phrases explain the exact same picture. Alpha (α , A) is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega (ω , Ω) is the last. Jesus, similarly, is both the start of all things and their end... maybe another way to understand it is: he is all in all.

- *To the thirsty* – Although God does provide for our physical needs, including thirst, this is especially pointing to our spiritual needs.

+ *I will give water* – Exactly meeting our need. Just like he always has done and always

will continue to do...now and through eternity.

* ***without cost*** – All God’s gifts are free, simply a result of his unending love for us. Anyone who says, “The best things in life ain’t free” clearly doesn’t know about God’s grace...you should probably tell them about it...

* ***from the spring of the water of life*** – Jesus told the woman at the well that he is the water of life [John 4]. In him we have a spring that never runs dry, and continually provides us with the purest, clearest, cleanest water that quenches our thirsting souls.

- ***Those who are victorious*** – We’ve returned to the same refrain that John listed at the end of each of his letters in chapters 2 and 3. Throughout the book we have seen various foes over which those who are victorious have won: In chapter 12 it was the devil, and the victory was won by the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony [12:11]...in chapter 15 those who were victorious over the beast and his image [15:2ff]. The one “who is victorious” is the Christian who has successfully resisted all the efforts of the devil and the anti-Christian world that seek to rob us of our faith in Christ.

+ ***will inherit all this*** – Inheritances are not earned, they are given. Also, in order for an inheritance to be given normally, a death must occur. Christ died the death that was needed, and we have received the benefit! Oh yeah, and it was all free of charge!

+ ***and I will be their God*** – Once again, God reminds us about just how blessed we will be to receive him as our God (and to have his dwelling among us!) [See v.3 for more]

+ ***and they will be my children*** – Points both to the inheritance mentioned above, and to the uniquely intimate relationship we have with God as our father and Christ as our brother....what a privilege and joy to be members of this family!

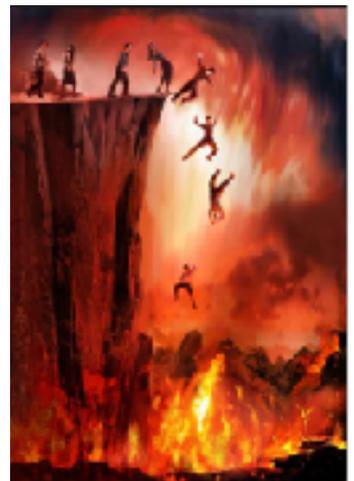
- ***But the...***

+ ***cowardly*** – Opposite of brave...that courage and confidence comes from knowing that our eternal destination is not a lake of fire, but the everlasting arms of God. God wants us to be sure, his Word (as we just mentioned) is both ***trustworthy and true***, and therefore gives us courage and dispels cowardice.

+ ***unbelieving*** – Opposite of believing...those without faith in Christ perish. Knowing the sins that follow, it’s interesting that these two (seemingly) “minor” offenses should lead the list, but keep the recipients of this letter in mind: John was writing to people who—at the time of his writing—were still a part of the apostate church (Babylon), and this is a call to repentance!

+ ***vile*** – Synonyms include: evil (which also happens to be an anagram), disgusting, and crude. The opposite being contrasted here would be “pure” or “holy” which we see in the white dress/robes of the great multitude gathered before God.

+ ***murderers*** – 5th commandment, extended not just to those who physically take a life (whether intention is included or not, as the law distinguishes murder from



manslaughter), but also to those who *hate their brother or sister* [1 John 3:15].

+ *sexually immoral* – This umbrella stretches far further than our society would like to admit. The ONLY acceptable place for sexual activity is marriage, the ONLY marriage that God sanctions is the lifelong union of one man and one woman. ANYTHING that happens outside of, beyond, before, after, or instead of that is *sexually immoral* and is not God-pleasing.

+ *those who practice magic arts* – People that look to magic are looking to something/someone other than God to provide for their needs/wants. What makes this especially insidious is that—especially in Roman times—those who practiced divination, witchcraft, or sorcery were commonly those who contacted evil spirits. This kind of activity is always dangerous, and since it is putting someone/something ahead of God, it is also a 1st commandment issue, just like...

+ *the idolaters* – 1st commandment. Anything can be an idol, including money, family, or self. Whatever takes 1st place in our lives is a 1st commandment issue, if it's not God.

+ *all liars* – The exact opposite of God, who is Truth itself. The “Devil” means liar. He is the father of lies, and the prime example of exactly what lies earn for us in the end.

- *...they will be consigned* – The Greek word for this is maybe a bit clearer...their “merit” (μέρος - meros) or “allotted portion” is what their deeds have earned. To be clear, as we saw in the previous chapter, we have earned no less damnation than they have...but salvation is a gift, damnation is what is merited. The only reason that we don't get what we've earned is because God is gracious and merciful.

+ *to the fiery lake of burning sulfur* – This picture has been reiterated several times throughout the last few chapters...first the destination for the beast and the false prophet [19:20], then for Satan himself [20:10], now for all his followers as well.

+ *This is the second death* – As mentioned at the end of the last chapter, this is eternal death that happens body and soul for unbelievers. Believers need not fear this death.

The Detailed Description of Christ's Bride, the New Jerusalem 21:9-27

The Brilliant Bride 21:9-11



- *One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls... came and said to me* – This may be the same angel who was taking John on the “tour” back in chapter 17.

However, no matter who this angel may be, the more important point here is the message this angel brought.

+ *full of the seven last plagues* – In case you had forgotten that these messengers of God were the bearers of the destruction of the world...here's your reminder.

- *Come, I will show you the bride* – Now, keep in mind...this is what he's showing us, “*the bride, the wife*

of the Lamb” but what John is going to describe is *a mountain, great and high*, and also *the Holy City, Jerusalem*. I'm not sure that I need to say it again, but John is speaking

metaphorically. What will become clear is that John is speaking of the Church (capital “C”) and that we are collectively that bride.

+ *the wife of the Lamb* – Everyone gets excited for a wedding! All the anticipation, the family and friends, the ceremony and the celebration...all of it combines together to make quite an event. But the bottom line for the couple doesn’t come on that day, but is the reality every day after this day...the two are now one, and that’s not going to change. At this point, on this day that we are all anticipating anxiously, our reality changes forever, and we are united with Christ...forever!

- *And he carried me away* – Different perspective, but as we’ll see from the description we’re actually looking at the same thing here, just highlighting a different emphasis. Where before we saw “*all things made new*” and what we will have in heaven was largely described by what we will NOT have there...now we see what WILL be there described in more fullness, richness, and complete perfection.

+ *in the Spirit* – (If this hadn’t been clear already) We are still dealing with vision language, meaning that we are not seeing what heaven will look like, but we are seeing aspects of what heaven will be like.

+ *to a mountain* – Mountain cities were much more easily fortified since they provided 1) a vantage point to the surrounding area and 2) a steep and difficult trek for anyone seeking to assault the city. As such, the picture of the mountain is one of security and safety. Not that heaven will ever be assaulted, but to contrast the insecurity and terror that so often are ours here on earth, John paints heaven’s protection with elegant eloquence.

* *great and high* – Emphasizes the qualities of the mountain that would be utilized as a fortress: “great” = a broad bases which needs to be navigated in order to find the correct path to the top. The greater a mountain, the more points of defense that a city could have...the more points of defense, the less likely an assault would succeed. “high” = a longer trek to the top, thus exhausting anyone who would attempt an assault leaving them less capable and more susceptible to succumb or surrender long before the city is finally reached.

- *and showed me the Holy City* – The fact that the city is “holy” gives us the definition of holiness, in that it is “set apart.” The city is also holy in that it is “perfect” or “complete” but that fact is emphasized less here and will be seen more in other details

+ *Jerusalem* – The city’s name means “The LORD is peace” (how have we not discussed this before now?!) That peace (absence of war or siege, fear or terror) is exactly the focus that the mountain was to symbolize and the purpose for which this city was “set apart.”

+ *coming down out of heaven from God* – Three short phrases (“coming down,” “out of heaven,” and “from God”) all of which show the source of this city, and also the source of its security and safety.

- *It shone* – The splendid glowing of the city is another reminder of the brilliance that perfection has, in contrast to the darkness of sin. We saw this same thing on the mountain of transfiguration [Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36] and in many angelic sightings they

are described as “bright” or “shining” [Luke 2:9, Acts 6:5, 12:7, Revelation 10:1, 15:6].

+ ***with the glory of God*** – An entire study could be done on this phrase alone (and, in fact, former Seminary President August Pieper did exactly that, in a 40+ page paper!). The phrase appears throughout the Old Testament, and the general consensus is that when this phrase appears, it is meant to direct our attention to God’s gracious, saving power and protection.

- ***and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel*** – Have you ever seen the way that a diamond catches the light around it and seems to amplify it in every direction? That’s the sort of impressive beauty that John is striving to depict here, again not referring to a physical brilliance, but the stunning shining that can only come from God’s own perfection.

+ ***like a jasper*** – According to the leading Greek lexicon available, the word for “jasper” here is “a precious stone found in various colors, mostly reddish, sometimes green, brown, blue, yellow, and white. In antiquity the name was not limited to the variety of quartz now called jasper, but could designate any opaque precious stone” [BDAG, ἰασπις (iaspis)]. For our understanding then, the best way to take this is as “precious gem” or something like that...and the value, brilliance, brightness, and color all combine to form a fuller picture for our minds’ eyes. [See also 4:3ff]

+ ***clear as crystal*** – Just like the lake on/around which the great multitude were standing [4:6, 15:2], here the picture is of peace (reinforced by the fact that the city is situated on a massive mountain and, as we’ll see shortly, also possesses insurmountable walls).

The Wall, the Gates, and the Foundations of the City 21:12-14

- ***It had a great, high wall*** – Yet another picture of the unquestionable security and safety this city offers. Not that heaven will/could ever be assaulted, but the idea is that even if it were, nothing would change.

+ ***with twelve gates*** – Keep an eye on all the “12s” that appear in the next verses...God is intentional in the details that he includes and, as we have seen earlier in the book, the number 12 stands for God’s Church. What a reminder of triumph for people living in a world militant against their Savior!

+ ***and with twelve angels at the gates*** – Guardians of the gates...sentinels, keeping a watchful eye on those who are beyond the borders. We also have “12” #2 and many more are on the way. The assurance that we have is that even though we are not currently dwelling in these borders, our citizenship is in heaven [Philippians 3:20] and God’s sentinel servants are keeping their watchful eyes on our lives as well!

- ***On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel*** – For this section, keep a finger back in Numbers 2 and Ezekiel 48:30-34. There are significant differences between the two lists, but the common thread between the two is the fact that the 12 tribes (divided in two



different ways) were divided into 4 groups of 3 and formed a perimeter of God's people. Also, this is 12 #3.

+ ***There were three gates on the east*** – Why start with east? This is actually the traditional way of thinking about directional orientation. Our culture usually defaults to the north, but their default was to the east, so starting there is natural. In Numbers Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were camped on the east [Numbers 2:3-7]. The three tribes named for Ezekiel's borders here were Joseph (father of two of the largest tribes), Benjamin (ancestor of Saul, the first king of Israel), and Dan [Ezekiel 48:32].

+ ***three on the north*** – The Israelite camp covered the north side of the camp last with Dan, Asher, and Naphtali [Numbers 2:25-29]. The Ezekiel divisions are: Reuben (firstborn son), Judah (son whose line carried the promise and the line of all kings from David on), and Levi (line of the priesthood) [Ezekiel 48:31]. I do not know why Ezekiel begins on the north end, other than he said he would [Ezekiel 48:30].

+ ***three on the south*** – Numbers: Reuben, Simeon, and Gad [Numbers 2:10-14]. Ezekiel: Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun [Ezekiel 48:33].

+ ***and three on the west*** – Numbers: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin [Numbers 2:18-22]. In the Israelite encampment (and in Canaan), Levi had no land specifically designated for them, but rather had cities in each tribe [Numbers 34:6-34]. Joseph's sons received the double-portion of land by each receiving an allotment where all the other sons only received a single portion. Ezekiel: Gad, Asher, and Naphtali [Ezekiel 48:34].

- ***The wall of the city had twelve foundations*** – This is the fourth 12 in just a few verses. Where we just saw the Old Testament Church in the walls of the city, now we find the New Testament Church in the foundations. This foundation is clearly Christ as is witnessed by both the prophets and apostles [See Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 7:24, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Timothy 6:19, 2 Timothy 2:19, 1 Peter 2:6, Hebrews 11:10].

- ***and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*** – 12 #5...Both reinforcing the definition of the Church as those who believe in Christ (by identifying another 12 in Scripture) and also backing up who the Lamb is (as though we hadn't figured that out by now) as Jesus, who had 12 followers.



Measurements of the City 21:15-17

- ***The angel who talked with me*** – Once again, we're not entirely sure which angel this is, but in any case the message that he bears is clearly from God and therefore the identity of the messenger is far less important than the identity of the one that messenger represents, namely God himself.

+ ***had a measuring rod*** – The last time we saw one of these was in chapter 11 when John himself was to measure several things (which were found wanting). Here, however, we have the place that truly "measures up" and meets God's standard of perfection.

* *of gold* – literally the “gold standard.” The values of this measuring device can be trusted as accurate.

* *to measure* – As these measurements are made, keep in mind that all of this is symbolic. Heaven itself is boundless and has no need for containment...the measurements do not restrict the city, but rather further reinforce its perfection and its identity as the eternal, precious home of God’s chosen people, the Church.

^ *the city* – Want a \$5 term for the day? This is an example of synecdoche, using a “part for the whole” or, more accurately in this case, “a whole for its parts.” By measuring the city, God’s servant was also measuring everyone individually, and unlike the previous attempt [ch.11] this time everyone and everything measures up perfectly.

^ *its gates and its walls* – Unbelievably massive (just look down a bit), yet that fits perfectly with the picture of safety and security that the Holy Spirit gives us through John’s pen.

- *The city was laid out like a square* – We’ll see in just a bit that an even more accurate term is “cube” but since a cube is made up of squares it’s not exactly a mistaken term either.

+ *as long as it was wide* – In the Greco-Roman mind, squares were a picture of perfection. Cities were laid out in as orderly a fashion as possible, and the components of those cities were kept as close to squares as possible...but even the best attempts met with eventual imperfection...until now.

- *He measured the city with the rod*

+ *and found it to be 12,000 stadia* – 12 #6... 12,000 stadia is about 1,400 miles (which, as it turns out is exactly the distance from Seattle, WA to St. Paul, MN). In other words, this is an incredibly massive structure, which is one of the points here: God’s home is big enough to house as many people as he wants. But the main point is to show that the dimensions are perfect, that is to say, complete.

* *in length and as wide and high as it is long* – A perfect cube, as the following three dimensions detail. Just like the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle [Exodus 26] and the Holy of Holies in the temple [1 Kings 6:16, 2 Chronicles 3:8, see also Ezekiel 41:4] but on a far more massive scale.

- *The angel measured the wall* – (because that’s what he was supposed to do, v.15)

+ *using human measurement* – John gives the measurement in human terms so that we can better understand it. And to say that it’s impressive is quite the understatement...

+ *and it was 144 cubits THICK* – Just think about that...a cubit is the length from your elbow to the tip of your finger (officially from the king’s elbow to his fingertip), which is about a foot and a half. So this wall ends up being 216 feet thick. That’s a 20+ story building, on its side! The Great Wall of China, at its widest is “only” between 15-30 feet thick (it varies from place to place). Also 12 #7 (even though it’s squared...)

The Substance and Adornments of the City 21:18-21

- *The wall was made of jasper* – Or “crystal/ precious gem” if that helps you understand it better.

- *and the city of pure gold* – Shining with brilliance, exceptionally valuable, and eternally enduring.

+ *as pure as glass* – Probably the purest substance available for John’s original audience. The “purity” or holiness is being highlighted here, showing that the very materials that form this city are just as pure and incorruptible as its inhabitants.

- *The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone* – These particular stones refer to the stones used in the breastplate of the high priest [Exodus 28:17-20, 39:10-13]. Though



the stones are “out of order” here, one more piece of the puzzle comes right after the stones are listed: *“There were twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes”* [Exodus 39:14, cf. 28:21]. While there is no authoritative coordination of them, it would seem to make sense to line the foundations with the gates [v.12-14] and to coordinate one of the twelve apostles with each (Note! No coordinating passage exists in Scripture, so these are educated guesses). To do that we’ll use the list from Acts 1:13, though there are lists in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19 and Luke 6:14-16 as well. Also, since this is a list of twelve, here’s 12 #8

+ *The first foundation was jasper* – Fourth row #12, Reuben, Peter

+ *the second sapphire* – Second row #5, Judah, John

+ *the third agate* – Third row #8, Levi, James

+ *the fourth emerald* – Second row #6, Joseph, Andrew

+ *the fifth onyx* – Fourth row #11, Benjamin, Philip

+ *the sixth ruby* – First row #1, Dan, Thomas

+ *the seventh chrysolite* – Fourth row #10, Simeon, Bartholomew

+ *the eighth beryl* – First row #3, Issachar, Matthew

+ *the ninth topaz* – First row #2, Zebulun, James

+ *the tenth turquoise* – Second row #4, Gad, Simon

+ *the eleventh jacinth* – Third row #7, Asher, Judas (Thaddeus in other lists, not Iscariot)

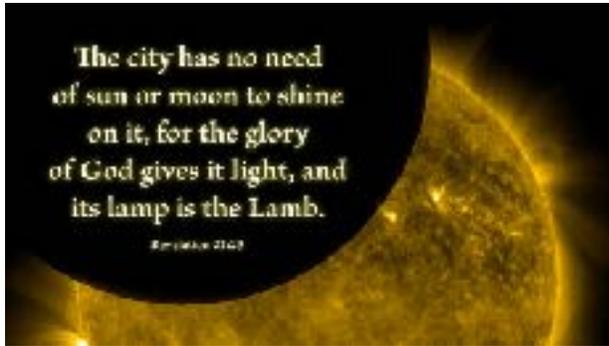
+ *the twelfth amethyst* – Third row #9, Naphtali, Matthias, Judas’ replacement [Acts 1:26]

- *The twelve gates were twelve pearls* – 12 #9 and #10 respectively. And, coincidentally, since 10 is the number of completeness, John stops there...10 twelves is the complete description of the Church in heaven.

+ *each was made of a single pearl* – As though we hadn’t seen enough wealth or splendor yet, now we also have giant “pearly gates” (yes, that’s where the term comes from). This is also likely a reference to the “pearl of great worth” [Matthew 13:45-46].

- *The great street of the city was of gold as pure as transparent glass* – One more reference to the sparkling splendor (and purity!) of the city that belongs to God.

Explaining What the City Has...by Saying What it Does Not Have 21:22-27



- *I did not see a temple in the city* – Basically, the whole city IS a temple. What's more is that both the tabernacle and the temple were pictures that pointed ahead both to Christ (who is the "temple" see below) and to heaven where Christ dwells forever.

+ *because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple* – We don't need a special place designated to worship. Like the Garden of Eden,

the whole place is designated to the purpose of worshiping God and the whole place is in the presence of God...no curtains, no separation.

- *The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it* – God didn't make the sun, moon and stars til day 4 of creation...the first three days of the world were basked in the light that God created (presumably shining from his presence). In eternity, we return to a similar state...no need for anything to house that light, because we have something (someone) even better!

+ *for the glory of God gives it light* – See notes above on "*with the glory of God*" (p.8).

+ *and the Lamb is its lamp* – The Psalmist said: "*Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path*" [Psalm 119:105]. While we are here on earth, God's Word is the best we can get...in heaven we will have the Word-made-flesh himself!

* *the nations will walk by its light* – Another nod to the diversity that we will see in heavens halls. Not nearly as jarring for those members of the seven churches in Asia Minor as it would have been for Old Testament hearers, but amazing to behold nonetheless.

* *and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it* – As opposed to Babylon where the kings of the earth derived their splendor from it, here our value and worth is defined by our citizenship, not vice versa.

- *On no day will its gates ever be shut* – This could be misinterpreted as saying "all are welcome" which is a clear gift of God's grace made clear elsewhere. However, the context here points to the fact that those gates never NEED to be shut, since there is no night (no danger).

+ *for there will be no night there* – Cities would keep their gates shut at night to keep thieves and other shady characters out...but this is heaven! No night, no thieves, no sin!

+ *the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it* – As we saw the city's diversity above, now we see that the greatness of those varied citizens adds to the value of the city.

- *Nothing impure will ever enter it* – What a comfort and joy for hurting souls in persecution!

- *nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful* – A further evidence against the "all are welcome" misunderstanding above. We have the awful ability to reject God's invitation.

+ *but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life* – God knows those who are his, and he comforts us with the knowledge that he has sought us (even before time was) and that we will join him because of the Lamb who wrote our names there!