

Pure Splendor

Then the angel showed me
the river of the water of life,
bright as crystal, flowing from
the throne of God and of the Lamb
through the middle
of the street of the city;
also, on either side of the river,
the tree of life
with its twelve kinds of fruit,
yielding its fruit each month.
The leaves of the tree were for
the healing of the nations.
Revelation 22:1-2 (ESV)

The Bride, Jerusalem, The City Of God (21:9-11)

- A. In a contrasting parallel of Revelation 17:1-3 (regarding the prostitute city of Babylon), one of the angels of the Bowl Judgments comes to “unveil” the Bride, now the radiant Wife of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (21:9-11).
- B. Marriage is a human foreshadowing, a living metaphor, of eternal relationship between God and His people (the Bride), and is mentioned often in the Bible.*

C. Union with Christ (21:9) is the eternal destination of the follower of Christ, this is the triumphant victory of the Lamb (note the high concentration of "the Lamb" in 21:9-22:5). The victory over evil and security of the follower of God is only achieved through the blood of the Lamb (12:11)!

D. In the same manner that Babylon was both a place of evil, and personalized (prostitute) those who were evil (cf. 17:5), so Jerusalem is personified by its inhabitants, the people of God (21:9-11), who bring the "bride-like" radiance to the "City of God" by their "all-in" faithfulness (12:11, also 1:9; 2:2-3, 10, 13, 19; 3:10; 6:9; 12:11, 17; 13:10; 14:12; 17:14; 20:4).

E. Significantly, this provides profound context to Jesus beginning His Gospel ministry of revealing His glory at a wedding by changing water to wine (John 2:1-11), and closing His ministry promising He would not drink wine again until the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Mark 14:25).

2

Adequate Square Footage (21:15-17)

A. The description of the Heavenly City of God is both spectacular, and rooted in rich biblical imagery. The city is described as a gigantic cube (21:12-22:5). If read literally, the city would be between 1,400-1,500 miles wide AND high. In other words, the city would cover most of the USA (Los Angeles to Kansas City), and since "outer space" begins about 60-70 miles above the earth, New Jerusalem would reach 1300+ miles into "outer space."

B. Consistent with Revelation, New Jerusalem is best understood as a symbol (the physical reality is a shadow of the spiritual reality), contrasted against Babylon, the "great prostitute" and "mother of prostitutes" (17:1-6).

C. Babylon is a elastic symbol for a world system. Similarly, New Jerusalem is a flexible symbol for a new world system where God's people are the edifice within which God & The Lamb/Christ dwell (21:3, 22:3) and can only be properly perceived and understood Spirit-ually (21:10).

*The imagery of Israel as the bride of Yahweh and the church as the bride of Christ has rich background in both OT and NT. It occurs primarily in the Prophets, (cf. Isaiah 54:5, also 49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Jeremiah 31:32). Ezekiel 16:7-14 describes beautifully the process by which God has prepared Israel as his bride (as in Revelation 19:7-8). Hosea 2:16-20 says that in the day when Israel returns to God, "you will call me 'my husband,' " and "I will betroth you to me forever." In the NT there are parables centering on a wedding (Matthew 22:1-14, 25:1-13), and Jesus speaks of himself as the bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20), as does John the Baptist (John 3:29). Paul speaks of presenting the believers "to one husband, to Christ," as "a pure virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2), and in Ephesians 5:25-32 he uses wedding imagery to describe Christ presenting "her to himself as a radiant church," or "Bride" (v. 32). Edited from Baker Exegetical Commentary of the NT: Revelation, by Grant Osborne.

- A. The gates are open to all, marked by Israel's open blessing of the nations (21:12-13, cf. Ezekiel 48:30-35), secured by powerful angelic sentinels. The foundations are established by the apostolic church (12:14), with Christ as the cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16).**
- B. The walls of New Jerusalem are majestically large, glowing and shining with tremendous splendor and beauty (21:10-11). The walls and edifice are God's people, His church, the Bride, the City of God in which He dwells and where His people are gathered to enjoy His presence and worship (22:3).**
- C. The radiant building materials of New Jerusalem reveal the vivid and spectacular diversity of its people and their unique reflection of God's glory (12:18-21). This is an eternal aspect of worship from every tribe, people, and language (cf. 7:9-12).**
- D. Jesus Christ promised His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Jesus was speaking of YOU (19:8)! The New Heaven/Earth is the transcendent location where God's people engage a new spiritual and physical reality. As God builds His church, He is building Heaven (1 Peter 2:4-10)!**
- E. This represents the extraordinary fulfillment of God's three great promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). A promised land, innumerable descendants, and blessing to all people through Abraham/Israel.**
- F. God's unvarnished splendor is revealed in the Great Gospel reward of Heaven, illumined by God's glory and the nations (21:22-27). God's blessings flow from Heaven's throne for all eternity. Heaven is Eden Renewed (22:1-2), bringing life and worship to all people living "between the two trees" (22:3-5).**