

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

NEW JERUSALEM
FROM THE
OUTSIDE

21:9-27

Revelation Observation Study Series

Revelation 21:9-27

New Jerusalem from the Outside

Remember the pattern? First, a panoramic view, then zoom in, then zoom in again for even more details? We were introduced to the sweeping view of the new heavens, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem. Now it's time to zoom in and take a much closer look at the New Jerusalem.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. Revelation 21:9-11

The descriptions of the angel who showed John the judgment of the great harlot (Revelation 17:1) and this angel are almost identical. Could they be one and the same? Quite possibly, even probably, but it could also be a different one from the seven.

Much more important is the contrast we are about to see. The angel shows John the antithesis of the great harlot who "sits on many waters;" the bride, the wife of the Lamb. It is no coincidence that God contrasts the judgment of Babylon with what lies ahead for the bride. He is making a point! Both are women, but the similarity ends there! Babylon is evil, unholy, and vile. The bride is righteous, holy, and pure. I will be inserting a few of these "Babylon versus the bride" contrasts as we go through this segment.

The angel tells John to "Come here," an interjection that means, "*Come here!*" It is not so much a gentle invitation as it is an imperative command.

When the angel in Revelation 17 carried John away in the Spirit, it was into a wilderness, a desolate wasteland. However, in Revelation 21, when the angel takes him away in the Spirit, it is to a great and high mountain, large and lofty, both in size and significance.

John is given the zenith view of the holy city, Jerusalem, as it comes down out of heaven from God. (Remember, this is a *new* heaven, not the one that presently exists.) This city is built by God; Jerusalem is God's city!

We see right away that while Babylon is burned, the bride is glorified! And not just any old glory, she has the glory of God! At Babylon's destruction, her fame was nothing more than the smoke of her burning. The Greek word for brilliance is "*phoster*," and

means a cause of light, illuminator, radiance, or luminary. The new Jerusalem will be a blaze of light to those who see her. John compared her brilliance to a very costly stone, like a stone of crystal-clear jasper. The Greek word for jasper is "*iaspis*" and means a precious stone of various colors like purple or cerulean (bluish) green. Here, the jasper is described as being crystal clear. The brilliance of the new Jerusalem will be like looking at a perfect diamond the size of the moon. She glows, gleams, and glistens with the glory of God! With our finite minds, we cannot even grasp the radiance of her luminescence and blazing light!

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Revelation 21:12-14

John zooms us in a little closer to see the wall around this marvelous city. In antiquity, fortifications and gates were made to be impressive and imposing, both to honor the cities they surrounded and protect the people inside their walls. The new Jerusalem has a great and high wall. John uses the same Greek words he used to describe the great and high mountain in Revelation 21:10. This is one solemn, mighty, and majestic wall!

This wall of walls around the new Jerusalem has 12 gates. In ancient times, Gates were not the width of a fence, like we think of; instead, they were the width of the wall they were in, like a vestibule or entrance hall. The openings in the walls were more like gateways with a "door."

Stationed at each gate is an angel. Take time to visualize the majesty of the angels posted at each entrance, eternally placed there as messengers of the Lord! Make no mistake, this is the city of the Lord!

Each of the 12 gates has a name written on it, the name of one of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel: Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Manasseh, Naphtali, Asher, Gad, Reuben, Judah, Simeon, Levi, and Issachar. (I've not listed them in any particular order.) The 12 gates are separated into four groups and placed on each side of the city wall. There are three gates on the east, north, south, and west sides, each with its own angel and one of the names of the tribes of Israel.

Besides having gates, the wall has foundation stones; there are 12, the same number as the gates. On each foundation stone, there is the name of one of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. Matthias, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, Nathaniel, Thaddeus, Matthew, Andrew, James, Simon Peter, James, and John. (Again, no particular order on my part.)

Some believe Paul will be one of the names written. I do not. Paul was not one of the "twelve." Paul was an apostle, and there were many, many apostles. But the 12 names are those of the Lamb. I don't believe these foundation stones are meant to exalt the

individuals listed on them. Likewise, I don't believe the names of the 12 tribes of Israel are written on the gates to esteem them. All glory belongs to God. I don't think it is about the individuals at all; instead, it is about how God used these two groups to accomplish His goal. The gates and the foundation stones help to tell the glorious story of how God built His city. Israel and the church; Jew and Gentile. Both played extraordinary roles in God's plan to bring glory to Himself.

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. Revelation 21:15-16

The angel who shows the new Jerusalem to John is seen holding a gold measuring rod. He is going to measure the city, its gates and its walls. He describes the city as being laid out as a square, with its length as great as its width. The angel measures the city with his rod and finds it to be 1,500 miles high, 1,500 miles long, and 1,500 miles wide.

What shape would that make? Sounds like a cube, doesn't it? When we remember the dimensions of the holy of holies, where the presence of God dwelt, it was a cube. Makes a lot of sense. Especially since the tabernacle and the temple were built after the pattern God gave Moses, which was taken from the true sanctuary in heaven, the place where God dwells.

The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar. 1 Kings 6:20

If the place where God dwells in heaven today is a cube, and both the tabernacle's and the temple's holy of holies were a cube, it just makes sense that the new Jerusalem, the place where God will dwell forever, will be a cube!

Before we talk about the 1,500 miles, let's consider the gold measuring rod. The angel is definitely not using the same Stanley measuring tape that I use! 1,500 miles? I don't think so! Maybe he's got a laser one? One that could shoot a laser and measure 1,500 miles? Still doubt it. The Greek word for rod is "*kalamos*" and means a cane or reed, either the plant or its stem. Okay, I know *none* of us has ever seen a cane or reed from a plant or tree that was 1,500 miles high! And, on top of all that, this rod is *gold*! This will be the new heaven and earth; this will be the new Jerusalem, and whatever measuring instrument the angel uses will be unique, too!

Now (I like this part), the angel measured the city, and it was a 1,500 mile cube. To try and help us understand just how monumental that is, think of flying in a plane. According to Wikipedia and several other online google results, most of us have flown between 6-8 miles high. Private jets fly a little above the rest of us and average 8.5-9.5 miles high. The famed Concorde could fly at over 11 miles high. Hmmm... How many miles higher would we need to travel to be the same height that the new Jerusalem will

be? Even passengers on the Concorde would have another 1,489 miles to go! Inconceivable! And yet, it's true.

Another way to try and understand the enormity of this measurement is to know that the highest mountains in the world (above sea level) are only 5 miles high. 1,500 miles - 5 miles = 1,495 more miles!

Now, try to visualize it also being that deep and wide! Roughly the city could reach from the East coast to the Mississippi River to the west. And from the Great Lakes in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south. So amazing and awesome!

Additional mind-boggling food for thought; if that is how big the new Jerusalem will be, just how enormous will the new earth be? Our present planet only has an 8,000-mile diameter; put a 1,500 mile high and wide city on this earth and, well, it's a lop-sided picture, to say the least! I can't believe I'm even asking. Just how vast will the new heavens be? My brain hurts. But my heart is warmed by the majesty and power of my God!

And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. Revelation 21:17-8

Does this sound like figurative language? These are "human" measurements. No symbolism here! We learn that "human" measurements and "angelic" measures are the same. Interesting!

Let's examine the wall a little more. The angel uses his really cool, gold measuring rod and finds that it is 72 yards high. (It will be over 1,500 miles long on each side of the city.) The height of the wall is approximately the same as the wingspan of a 747 Airliner, 3/4 the length of a football field, 1 1/2 the length of an Olympic size swimming pool, or 3/4 as tall as the Statue of Liberty!

What I know for sure is that it will tower in height! And yet, its height will pale in comparison to the 1,500 miles high city it surrounds!

The wall's material is jasper again. And the city is made of pure gold. The Greek word for pure is "*katharos*" and means clean and transparent. Interestingly, it is the identical Greek word used in this very verse when it refers to the clear glass. There will be no impurities in God's gold; His city will be crystal clear.

The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. Revelation 21:19-20

The harlot, Babylon, will be clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, but her ornamentation is shoddy and cheap next to the resplendent brilliance and spectacular majesty of even the *foundation stones* of God's city; the bride of the Lamb. God adorns each of her foundation stones, but remember that each foundation stone also has the name of one of the 12 apostles. There are 12 apostles' names, 12 foundation stones, and 12 different precious stones.

Some of these stones will sound familiar to us. Scholars have not been able to identify all of them. Some people believe the names of the stones have changed from the time Revelation was written. But it is also a possibility that in the new heaven and new earth there are stones which have never been seen before

I'll give you a list of the Greek words and what they mean*. Remember, the English words we read are simply the best choices an interpreter could make.

The first foundation stone is jasper. "*Iaspis*." A precious stone of various colors, like purple, cerulean (bluish) green.

The second foundation stone is adorned with sapphire. "*Sapphiros*." A precious gem of blue in various shades, next in hardness and value to the diamond.

The third foundation stone is adorned with chalcedony. "*Chalkedon*." A gem, generally of a whitish, bluish, or gray color. Capable of high and beautiful polish. There are several varieties, such as the onyx, or modern carnelian.

The fourth foundation stone is adorned with emerald. "*Smaragdos*." A gem of pure green color. The ancients probably comprised all stones, which were a fine green color.

The fifth foundation stone is adorned with sardonyx. "*Sardonyx*." A gem exhibiting the color of the carnelian and the white of the calcedony, intermingled in alternate layers.

The sixth foundation stone is adorned with sardis. "*Sardion*." Carnelian, a precious reddish stone.

The seventh foundation stone is adorned with chrysolite. "*Chrysolithos*." A name applied by the ancients to all gems of a gold color, specifically the modern topaz.

The eighth foundation stone is adorned with beryl. "*Beryllos*." Beryl, a precious stone of a sea-green color, found chiefly in India.

The ninth foundation stone is adorned with topaz. "*Topazion*." A topaz, a gem of a yellowish color, different from the modern topaz.

The tenth foundation stone is adorned with chrysoprase. "*Chrysoprasos*." A species of gem of a golden green color like that of a leek.

The eleventh foundation stone is adorned with jacinth. "*Hyakinthos*." A gem resembling the color of the hyacinth flower dark blue.

The twelfth foundation stone is adorned with amethyst. "*Amethystos*." A gem of a deep purple or violet color.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. Revelation 21:21

We are directed back to the 12 gates once again. We were already informed that the wall was made out of crystal clear jasper; now, we find out what the gates in the wall are made of. Yes, you read it correctly; they are pearls! Not made out of pearls, but each one of the gates *is* a single pearl, splendid and spectacular!

Reason with me for a minute. These are ginormous pearls, so I have to ponder the size of the oysters that produced them. The new earth, it would appear, is going to be colossal compared to the present globe. No doubt could contain enormous oysters. But then I am reminded that there will be no sea on the new earth. Hmmm... Could they be freshwater oysters somehow from the water of life, which we will see in Revelation 22? Hmmm again...

Perhaps I'm not looking at this correctly. Does God even need an oyster to create a pearl? Certainly not. He might just have given oysters the ability to make pearls to help them pass the time. Grinning. This is the new (*kainos*) earth we're talking about; things are qualitatively new, which have never been seen before. Obviously, I do not need an answer to my dilemma, but I know one thing for sure; God originally created the oyster without the pearl; He can just as easily create the pearl without the oyster.

The street of the city is pure gold, just like the city itself. John describes the pure gold as being *like* transparent glass, synonymous with the pure gold of the city being *like* clear glass. It's hard to get my mind around the luminous beauty of my future home!

Did you notice how many streets are in the new Jerusalem? Usually, people refer to the "streets" of gold, but God only speaks of one.

While we're at it, have you ever heard the phrase, "*I hope my mansion's next to yours?*" I'm sorry, but there is nothing in the Bible that speaks about mansions, plural. My Father has a house and in it are many living quarters. *In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.* John 14:2

Ancient Israel gives us a picture of the process. The father adopted the bride as his new daughter. Once the engagement was official, the son prepared the new home for his soon to be family. He built an addition onto the father's house. When the father declared the new living quarters were ready, the son immediately went to get his bride. We will all

live in the Father's house! Our yearning should not be to live close to *one another*; instead, our desire is to be with the *Lord*.

...we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. Revelation 21:22-23

There will be no temple in the new Jerusalem; the explanation given is that the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple.

It's interesting. If we walk through the Bible, taking note of God's presence and dwelling place with man, we see that each is a foreshadow of the real temple. Each temple becomes more and more glorious.

If we start with Moses' tabernacle, then look at Solomon's temple, and continue on to Herod's temple, we can see a pattern emerging; from marvel to more magnificent marvel. The next temple is in the church, the body of Christ; the Holy Spirit indwells each of us, which surely qualifies for greater awe and amazement. Next will be the rebuilt temple, where Jesus, Himself, will be found His millennial reign. Nothing has *ever* compared to *this* glory!

We find ourselves observing the new Jerusalem, and we finally see the *real* temple. When we see this ultimate sanctuary, it is not the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb dwelling *in* it. The temple *is* the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb! The sanctuary is *Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb!* Perhaps the best thing would be to get down on your knees and ask God to help you understand the gravity of it all! And then praise Him for whatever understanding He has granted you from His Word.

The city has no temple because the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple. What else is "missing" from the new heaven and from the new earth? There is no longer a need for the sun or the moon to shine on the new Jerusalem! And why not? Because the glory of God has illumined it! And its lamp is the Lamb!

The rays of God's brilliant glory will shine throughout His beloved city, the new Jerusalem. (Keep in mind that the overcomers will dwell there.) The lamp of His glory will be the Lamb.

There is not a lot of difference between the light source and the light holder. In our present world, we understand the difference between what's inside the light bulb and the light bulb itself, just as we can see the difference between the light bulb and the lamp, which holds the light bulb. We can see the difference between the candle and the light it emits. It's not quite so easy to distinguish what John is telling us here. Christ is

described in Hebrews 1:3 as the radiance of God's glory. Again, perhaps a visit to His throne might help.

In the tabernacle, as well as the temple, there were lampstands or candlesticks to light the courts, etc. In the holy of holies, which compares to the new Jerusalem in shape and function, there was no need for a candlestick. Why not? Because the Shekinah glory, the light of God's presence illumined it. The same is true here; God's presence is the light of the new Jerusalem. Amazing, isn't it?

I am shaking my head back and forth in wonder and admiration (and I have a grateful smile on my face.)

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:24-27

The light emanating from the city covers the entire new earth! The nations (companies of people on the planet other than the city) will be able to walk by the light from the new Jerusalem. (A foreshadowing of this is found in Isaiah 60 where it refers to the millennial reign.) Picture brilliant light rays coming from the city, which are strong enough to light the entire planet. (And, try to imagine just how big this new earth will have to be to hold this ginormous 1,500-mile cube of a city!)

Who are the nations? They are not "the unrighteous" because that group is now in the lake of fire and brimstone. They are not the bride of Christ, nor are they the wife of God. The nations are on the new earth, which is outside of the new Jerusalem. Think back a bit to when Christ came in His glory to judge and wage war. Revelation 19:11-21. After His victory, the King of kings and Lord of lords will sit on His glorious throne to judge what's left of the nations. There will be survivors left in the countries from where the armies came; non-military, like grandparents, mothers, children, invalids, and men who did not go to war. (I showed you that judgment from Matthew 25. If you don't remember, you will find it in the Revelation 19:11-21 scene.)

At that time (right after His second coming), Messiah will gather the survivors together before His throne and separate them into the sheep and the goats. The goats will be sent right then and there into the lake of fire. In contrast, the sheep will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. These are the peoples who will be ruled over during the millennial reign. The sheep will multiply for those 1,000 years and become a sizable and vast populace. The righteous descendants of these sheep eventually will enter into the new heavens and the new earth. (Their unrighteous descendants, the dead, were judged at the great white throne judgment.) Take note, though; these, although righteous, are never part of the church, never part of the body of Christ. These, at least in part, are the nations on the new earth.

Who are the kings of these nations? We know they are not the church; the church is the city and will never leave it. They might possibly be appointed by God or simply rise into a leadership position themselves. Whoever they are, the kings will come into the city as representatives of the nations; they will bring their glory, and the glory and the honor of their peoples into it when they do.

Evidently, the kings may enter at all times. There will never be night, just daytime. The gates into the city will never close. Shutting a gate is especially useful at night. The dark of night is when the agents of evil are most active. However, two significant changes will have taken place; the agents of evil will be in the lake of fire for eternity and won't be bothering anyone again, and on the new earth, there will be no darkness. God's glory will shine all the time; there will no longer be night. No. More. Darkness!

In case you had any doubt about where the new Jerusalem will really be on the new earth rather than in heaven, you can stop wondering. Even though the Bible already made it clear at the beginning of this chapter (by twice telling us that the city comes *down out of heaven to earth*), it now makes it even more evident. The nations will be *on the earth*. Their kings will enter the city that is *on the earth*.

Are you disappointed that the eternal "heaven" is really the eternal new "earth"? Don't be! God's plans for us are so much better than anything we could think up on our own. If you die in the Lord at this present time, you will go to this heaven; but, don't unpack everything because it's going to pass away.

One year, after studying this chapter, a student said emphatically, "Well, *I'm* not going to live on *earth*, *I'm* going to live in *heaven*!" She's going to be awfully disappointed!

The bride of Christ *is* the city; she will live there with her husband. The wife of God, Israel, will also be there with her husband. What is the prerequisite for coming into the city? Their names have to be written in the Lamb's book of life.

What, and who, do we know will never, ever come into the city? Nothing unclean, no one who practices abominations and lying shall ever come into it. Why not? Because that category of creatures will be in the lake of fire. So, what can we know about these kings? They are clean and pure.

This is a fascinating list. Think back to the prostitute, the city Babylon. She was full of abominations and unclean things. Opposite of God's holy city! No unclean thing ever! No one who practices abominations and lying ever!

God created creation to bring glory to Himself. He wanted His creation to see who He really was. His creation rejected Him, so they received death, but He sent the Seed to bring life. Those who rejected the Seed were sent to the second death for eternity. Those who believed in the Seed and repented were given eternal life and glory with

God. Here, in the new Jerusalem, God's Glory is seen by all His creation!

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God! His judgments are righteous and faithful! Amen! Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Give praise to our God, all His bond-servants, you who fear Him, both the small and the great! Amen! Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! For the Lord, our God, the Almighty, reigns! Amen! Hallelujah!

**Stone definitions are taken from Mounce Greek Dictionary.*