

Lesson 32: Chapter 21

Revelation 21 continues the final and climactic vision of the book. We are in Cycle 7, which is the only cycle that shows what follows the end of *This Age*. We are no longer viewing tribulation, beastly opposition, or the perseverance of the saints; now we behold the consummation: the New Heaven and New Earth. **Revelation 20** gave a sweeping panorama of the Church Age: Satan's binding (**vv. 1-3**), the Church's reign with Christ (**vv. 4-6**), the final rebellion (**vv. 7-10**), and the Last Judgment (**vv. 11-15**). *This Age* ended and the old creation passed away. Now, in **Revelation 21**, we turn the page. What follows is no mere addendum to judgment, but the fulfillment of promises made to the conquerors (cf. **Revelation 2-3**): a new creation where death, sin, and separation are no more, and God dwells in perfect covenantal communion with His people. What was promised is now seen: not Babylon, but Jerusalem; not the harlot, but the Bride; not judgment, but glory.



[1] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

[5] And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." [6] And 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 from the spring of the water of life without payment. [7] The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. [8] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

[9] Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." [10] And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, [11] having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. [12] It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were

inscribed—[13] on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. [14] And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

[15] And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. [16] The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. [17] He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. [18] The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. [19] The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, [20] the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, 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 of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

[22] And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. [24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. [26] They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. [27] But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(Revelation 21, ESV)

The New Heaven and New Earth (vv. 1–4)

The Final Fulfillment of Redemptive Hope

John is given a vision of cosmic renewal: a new heaven and a new earth. This is not a mere renovation or moral improvement of the old creation, but the unveiling of a qualitatively new reality: the eternal, glorified dwelling place of God with His redeemed people. The “first” creation has passed away (cf. [Revelation 20:11](#)), just as Jesus said “*heaven and earth will pass away*” ([Matthew 24:35](#)), and Peter described the old world being dissolved ([2 Peter 3:10–13](#)). This is the final state, *The Age to Come*, long anticipated in texts like [Isaiah 65:17](#) and [Isaiah 66:22](#).

“The Sea Was No More”

This cryptic phrase isn’t about *hydrology*, but *theology*. In biblical symbolism, the sea often represents chaos, evil, and separation. From the very beginning, God subdued the chaotic “deep” (tehôm) and imposed order on the waters ([Genesis 1:2, 6–10](#)). Throughout the OT, the sea is portrayed as the domain of unruly nations ([Isaiah 17:12–13](#)), of the wicked ([Isaiah 57:20](#)), and even as the origin of beastly powers ([Daniel 7:2–3](#)). God’s sovereignty is shown by His power to restrain, divide, and defeat the sea ([Psalm 89:9–10](#); [Job 38:8–11](#); [Isaiah 51:9–10](#)). In Revelation itself, the beast rises from the sea ([Revelation 13:1](#)), the sea gives up the dead ([Revelation 20:13](#)), and the glorified Church is seen standing beside a sea of glass ([Revelation 15:2](#)), no longer threatened by it. To say “*the sea was no more*” ([Revelation 21:1](#)) is to say: the forces of disorder, danger, and separation are gone forever. Evil has no foothold in the new creation. And more personally, there is no longer any separation between God and man, or among God’s people.

The Holy City Comes Down

John sees “*the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God*” (v. 2). This vision is not of believers going *up to heaven*, but of heaven coming *down to earth*. The direction is crucial. The Church, glorified and perfected, descends as the Bride, prepared for her Husband (cf. [Ephesians 5:27](#)). This affirms the truth that the New Jerusalem *already* exists in heaven, where the saints *already* reign with Christ ([Revelation 20:4](#)). At the end of *This Age*, this heavenly reality is revealed and united with a new earth. This is the joining of our new *spiritual* creation in Christ with the new *physical* creation.

God Dwells With His People

The loud voice from the throne announces the heart of the vision: “*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man*” (v. 3). This is the climax of every covenant promise: from Eden to Noah to Abraham to Sinai to Canaan to Jerusalem to the New Covenant in Christ: “*I will be their God, and they shall be My people*” (cf. [Leviticus 26:11–12](#); [Ezekiel 37:27](#); [2 Corinthians 6:16](#)). Now that promise is fulfilled. No longer do we see by type or shadow, but in eternal communion.

No More Death or Pain

All the griefs of the old creation—death, mourning, crying, pain—are *gone* (v. 4). They belonged to the old order, which has now passed away. The Lamb who once wiped away *sins* now wipes away *tears*. This is the personal, tender love of our God, who not only conquers evil but restores joy.

God’s Declaration from the Throne (vv. 5–8)

The Voice of Authority and Assurance

Now, the One seated on the throne speaks. Not an angel, not a narrator, but God Himself. This is only the second time in the book that He speaks directly (cf. [Revelation 1:8](#)), underscoring the gravity of the moment. What He says is not merely descriptive but declarative: “*Behold, I am making all things new.*” The use of the present, active, indicative verb (“*I am making*”) implies an active, ongoing,

consummating work. This is not God tweaking or upgrading creation; He is recreating it entirely, finishing what was begun at Calvary and inaugurated at Christ's resurrection.

These Words Are Trustworthy and True

John is told to write, not just see, for what God has spoken is *"trustworthy and true"*. This phrase echoes back to [Revelation 19:9](#) and forward to [Revelation 22:6](#), forming a bracket of divine certainty. The Church in every age needs this assurance: the new creation is not wishful thinking, but guaranteed by God. As surely as Babylon fell in judgment, the Bride will rise in glory.

"It Is Done" — Echoes of the Cross and the Bowls

God declares, *"It is done!"* This is a final echo of both [Revelation 16:17](#) (the 7th bowl) and [John 19:30](#) (Christ's cry from the cross, though a different word). In each case, a divine work is completed: judgment in [Revelation 16](#), redemption in the Gospels, and now new creation in [Revelation 21](#). The Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, speaks as the One who rules all history, ensuring that nothing in the story of redemption is left unfinished. It also speaks to the parallelism of judgment of sin. For those in Christ, judgment is satisfied in Christ on the Cross. For those outside of Christ, judgment is satisfied on the sinner's own head. Think of this when considering the new debate on Penal Substitutionary Atonement: if sinners bear their own sin and guilt, how did Christ bear ours?

A Promise and a Warning

[Revelation 21:6](#) promises that to the thirsty, God will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. This is sheer grace, salvation as a gift, freely given to those who know their need. This echoes [Isaiah 55:1](#) and is fulfilled in Christ (cf. [John 4:10-14](#); [7:37-39](#)). But [Revelation 21:8](#) brings a sober contrast: the lake of fire remains the destination for the unrepentant. The inheritance of the saints ([v. 7](#)) and the second death ([v. 8](#)) are the only two final outcomes.

The Overcomer Inherits All Things

[Revelation 21:7](#) forms a climax: *"The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."* This is covenant language again, pointing back to [2 Samuel 7:14](#) and [Romans 8:17](#). The conquerors are not spiritual elites; they are all those who endure in faith (cf. [Rev 2-3](#)), trusting in Christ and persevering to the end.

The Bride, the Wife of the Lamb (vv. 9–14)

A Literary and Theological Parallel

This is deliberately parallel to [Revelation 17](#), meant to highlight the cosmic reversal taking place:

Revelation 17:1-3

- *One of the seven angels with the bowls*
- *Come, I will show you*
- *the judgment of the great prostitute...*
- *He carried me away in the Spirit*
- *into a wilderness*
- *And I saw a woman... Babylon*

Revelation 21:9-10

- *One of the seven angels with the bowls*
- *Come, I will show you*
- *the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.*
- *He carried me away in the Spirit*
- *to a great, high mountain*
- *And he showed me a city... New Jerusalem*

This parallelism and contrast is intentional and theological. Babylon and Jerusalem are rival cities. And rival women. One is the counterfeit bride, corrupted by the world and judged by God. The other is the true Bride, purified and glorified, prepared for eternal communion. The Church has been described in many ways throughout Revelation—lampstands, priests, martyrs—but now she is seen as what she has always truly been: the Bride of Christ (cf. [Ephesians 5:25-27](#); [Revelation 19:7-9](#)).

Why Does the Bride Descend?

The angel says he will show John the Bride, but John sees the City, because in Revelation, the Bride *is* the City. The New Jerusalem is not just *a place*, it is *a people*. This vision affirms that the

Church during the Millennium is reigning with Christ in heaven ([Revelation 20:4](#)). That's why, at the end of the Millennium, the Bride descends from heaven. She has been there all along, reigning with her Husband, awaiting the final day when heaven and earth are united.

A City Radiating Glory

The city is described as "*having the glory of God*" ([v. 11](#)). This is the Shekinah glory once limited to Eden, the tabernacle, and the temple, now made fully manifest. No longer does God's presence dwell in tents or temples made by hands. The Church is now fully glorified and permanently indwelt by the triune God (cf. [Ephesians 2:22](#)).

The Gates and the Foundation

The walls of the city have 12 gates, with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 foundations, with the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb ([vv. 12–14](#)). This imagery reinforces the continuity of redemptive history: the people of God are one. There is no heavenly distinction between Old Testament and New Testament saints. 12 tribes and 12 apostles signify *one redeemed people*, built on Christ. (Indeed, if one were to press the imagery too literally, the Church's foundation is the apostles, not the tribes.) The proper reading sees this not as a literal structure, but a symbolic representation of the covenantal unity and eternal security of the Church (cf. [Galatians 6:16](#); [Hebrews 12:22–24](#)).

It is striking that one enters the city through the gates named for the tribes, but the foundation beneath is that of the apostles. This may hint at the unfolding nature of God's redemptive plan: *promised* in the Garden, *rooted* in Israel, *fulfilled* in Christ, *revealed* through the apostles. And if we pressed the arithmetic too hard, we'd run into familiar symbolic irregularities: "Which 12 tribes?" and "Which 12 apostles?" But the numbers point to *completeness*, not a *census*.

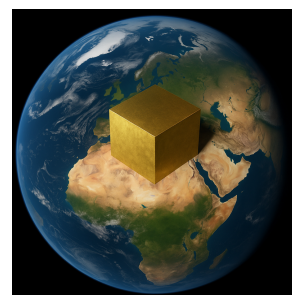
The New Jerusalem Described (vv. 15–21)

Measured for Glory

An angel now measures the city, just as Ezekiel's visionary temple was measured ([Ezekiel 40–42](#)). Here, as in Ezekiel, it is to show perfection and holiness, *NOT* literal dimensions. This is a secure, sanctified dwelling place, measured not by man's standard, but with a rod of gold, an angelic or heavenly standard.

A Perfect Cube

The city is described as being a cube, its length, width, and height are equal ([v. 16](#)). This is not random geometry: the only other cube in the Bible is the Most Holy Place ([1 Kings 6:20](#)). The message is profound: the entire city is the Holy of Holies (cf. [Zechariah 14:20–21](#)). There is no need for a temple, because the Church, fully redeemed and glorified, is now the place where God's presence dwells in fullness. The city's enormous size (12,000 stadia = ~1,400 miles per side) is symbolic of immensity and completeness, *not literal measurements*. The picture to the right is *NOT* what the New Earth looks like!



12 and Its Multiples

The numbers throughout this description are symbolically loaded. The wall is 144 cubits (12×12), matching the 144,000 of [Revelation 7](#) and [Revelation 14](#), a symbol of the full number of the redeemed. The repetition of 12 (gates, foundations, pearls, jewels) conveys fullness, order, and God's perfect design. This is not chaos redeemed; it is intentional beauty brought to perfection.

Adorned with Glory and Beauty

The foundations are adorned with every kind of jewel ([vv. 19–20](#)), echoing both the priestly breastplate ([Exodus 28:17–20](#)) and the Edenic rivers ([Genesis 2:12](#)). The gates are each made of a single pearl ([v. 21](#)), and the streets are of pure gold, like transparent glass. This is not a crass display of wealth (and what is clear gold, anyway??). It is a symbolic portrayal of the Church's glory: refined, radiant,

and precious in God's sight (cf. [Ephesians 5:27](#)). The beauty of the city reflects the beauty of Christ's Bride, and the wealth reflects the worth of her Redeemer.

A Vision of the Church Glorified

This city is not heaven as a "place" apart from the people of God. This is the glorified Church herself, described in terms of architectural majesty. John sees the city; the angel said he would see the Bride ([v. 9](#)). These are not two different entities. The Bride is the City, and the City is adorned for her Husband. All the imagery presses us to see that the final state of the Church is not just spiritual, but radiantly glorious, permanent, personal, and *physical*.

The Temple and Light of the City (vv. 22–27)

No Temple, Because God Is There

In ancient Israel, the temple was the center of worship, sacrifice, and God's presence, but also of separation: courts, curtains, and barriers. Even under the New Covenant, we "*see through a glass darkly*" ([1 Corinthians 13:12](#)) and worship by faith, not by sight. But in the New Jerusalem, John says, "*I saw no temple*". Why? The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. There is no more mediation, no more veiling. The whole city is the Holy of Holies (cf. [v. 16](#)), and every citizen dwells in unveiled communion with the Triune God. Compare this to [Exodus 34:29-35](#), where Moses had direct dialog with God and his face was shining, so much so that it scared the people, so he had to veil his face. In heaven, *EVERY* believer will have closer communion with God than even Moses experienced.

This doesn't mark the absence of temple worship. It marks its consummation. Every typological shadow has given way to the substance. As God said through Ezekiel, "*The name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is there*" ([Ezekiel 48:35](#)).

The Lamb Is Its Lamp

Just as there is no temple, there is also no sun or moon ([v. 23](#)). This isn't *necessarily* a denial of physical luminaries in the new creation, but a statement of glory. (Though Genesis does speak of light existing before the sun was created, so I don't dare to speculate about *exactly* what the New Heavens and the New Earth will be like. Remember, this is symbolic imagery, not literal.) The glory of God illumines the city. And the Lamb is its lamp. This recalls [John 1:4-5](#): "*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*" The Church's light no longer flickers in a dark world (cf. [Revelation 1:20](#)); she now shines with divine glory, radiating the light of Christ in eternal brilliance.

The Nations Come In

A stunning detail: "*By its light will the nations walk*" ([v. 24](#); cf. [Zechariah 14:16-19](#)). The kings of the earth bring their glory into the city. This is the fulfillment of [Isaiah 60](#): a vision not of exclusion, but ingathering. The gates are never shut ([v. 25](#)), and nothing unclean may enter, because those who enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life ([v. 27](#)). The nations are not "out there" anymore; the elect from every tribe and tongue and people are gathered into one holy, global Bride.

What the City Is and Is Not

The city is not defined by what it lacks, but by what it has become:

- *No temple*: because God is fully present
- *No sun or moon*: because the Lamb is the light
- *No night, no locked gates*: because there is no more threat***
- *No impurity*: because all evil has been judged

**** Remember that it only took 2 angels to overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet heaven has 12 angels AT EACH GATE!!! Again, not a literal representation, but a symbol of overwhelming power and security for the City of God.*

This is Eden restored and glorified, the end of the pilgrimage, the answer to every longing, the Celestial City. And it is the destiny of the Church; not a spiritual elite, not a future ethnic remnant, but the full number of the redeemed in Christ, the Bride made ready.