

The Celestial City

Revelation 21:9-27

- I. “No mores” in heaven.
 - A. No more tears (4)—because hurtful memories will be replaced.
 - B. No more death (4)—mortality will be swallowed up by life.
 - C. No more mourning (4)—because sorrow will be completely comforted.
 - D. No more crying (4)—because sounds of weeping will be soothed.
 - E. No more pain (4)—because all human suffering will be cured.
 - F. No more thirst (6)—because God will graciously quench all desires.
 - G. No more wickedness (8)—because all evil will be banished.
 - H. No more temple (22)—because the Father and Son are personally present.
 - I. No more night (23-25)—because God’s glory will give eternal light.
 - J. No more closed gates (25)—because Gods doors are always open.
 - K. No more curse (22:3)—because Christ’s blood has forever lifted that curse.
- II. Heaven anticipated in Scripture.
 - A. Abraham looked **for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God** (Hebrews 11:10).
 - B. **“For behold, I am creating new heavens and a new earth.”** (Isaiah 65:17).
 - C. Jesus and the eleven disciples (John 14:1-6).
- III. God is making all things new (Revelation 21:5).
 - A. Since the fall (Genesis 3) God is in process of making all things new.
 - B. Spiritually man can be made new (2 Corinthians 4:16).
- IV. Eight details of New Jerusalem—Heaven (21:9-27).
 - A. Origin of the celestial city (21:9-10).
 1. New Jerusalem is the bride of the Lamb. Origin = Heaven.

- B. Appearance of the celestial city (21:11).
 - 1. Glory and brilliance.
- C. Exterior of the celestial city (21:12-14).
 - 1. There are twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - 2. There are twelve foundation stones with the names of the twelve apostles on them.
- D. Dimensions of the Celestial City (21:15-17).
 - 1. It is a cube—1500 miles X 1500 miles X 1500 miles.
 - 2. Possibilities (Henry Morris).
 - a. 20 billion redeemed of all time (past, present and future)
 - b. Each person will have 76 acre blocks (hypothetical estimate).
 - 3. The city will be transparent.
- E. Materials of the celestial city (21:19-21).
 - 1. New Jerusalem will be stunningly beautiful—every precious stone.
 - 2. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone (V.19).
 - 3. Each one of the twelve gates is an individual pearl! (V.21).
- F. Distinctiveness of the celestial city (21:21).
 - 1. There will be no place of worship (no sanctuary). In heaven it won't be a place of worship, it will be a who we will worship—Almighty God and the Lamb.
- G. Brilliance of the Celestial City (21:23-27).
 - 1. No sun or moon—glory of God will illuminate (V. 23).
 - 2. Nations and kings? Can't be the same definition of nations and kings of today. Most likely all the redeemed come and worship the One true king. (Vs. 24-27).

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Revelation 21:9-27

As I meditated on this passage we have come to this morning... Revelation 21:9-27... I could not help but compare and contrast our future existence in heaven to our current existence here on earth...I didn't need to go back any further than this last week to see just how vivid the contrast is...just a typical week....even in the many mundane things we do every day....there is a vivid contrast.

Getting out of bed Monday morning, taking my morning heart meds for my blood pressure and cholesterol... coming to the church office to review some quotes for repairing the failing asphalt in our parking lot... making arrangements for the new security surveillance system for our church for the safety of our people... visit my father-in-law in the hospital with a broken neck and back after a terrible accident the previous Saturday night.

Counseling with hurting people in broken relationships or health issues...a weakly endeavor...catching up with the daily news.... The war with Iran... the tension with China and Russia...our dysfunctional congress and political system...

Turning down a second slice of birthday cake because of the calories... having to weed-eat... mow the lawn... spray for thistle... replace the pressure tank in the well if to have water running again...make arrangements with the optometrist because the eyes seem to be getting blurrier... fix the leaking faucet... think about exercising...

That's just normal stuff... yet... none of that will be a part of eternal life in heaven... it's hard if not impossible to imagine what it will be like...it's not just that those things won't exist... **it is all that lies underneath those things won't exist...**

The apostle John gives us the best and most detailed description in the Bible as to what heaven will be like in Revelation 21 and 22...[arguments as to take it literally or view it more symbolically.... I have no problem with either...]

Last week we began to look at heaven in chapter 21... we saw that there is quite a list of “*no mores*” in heaven... starting with **No more sea (1)**... chaos and calamity will be eradicated.

No more tears (4)—because hurtful memories will be replaced. {not just tears, but everything that caused them]

No more death (4)—mortality will be swallowed up by life.

No more mourning (4)—because sorrow will be completely comforted.

No more crying (4)—because sounds of weeping will be soothed.

No more pain (4)—because all human suffering will be cured.

No more thirst (6)—because God will graciously quench all desires.

No more wickedness (8)—because all evil will be banished.

And this morning's text adds four more *no mores*:

No more temple (22)—because the Father and Son are personally present.

No more night (23-25)—because God's glory will give eternal light.

No more closed gates (25)—because God's doors are always open.

No more curse (22:3)—because Christ's blood has forever lifted that curse.

That's a lot of "no mores"... but there is a lot of new things added as we will see this morning...our passage this morning doesn't call us to do anything or specifically make some changes in our lives... this is an informational passage...when we leave this morning we should all have a vivid picture of what heaven will be and look like...and this will only be a glimpse.

This heaven, this eternal place has been anticipated throughout the Scriptures...

Going back to the very first patriarch, Abraham... actually we don't have to go back far in the Bible to see this about that man... we can go to the New Testament book of Hebrews chapter 11... Abraham, some 1900 years before John wrote Revelation... was looking for a future city of God...

Hebrews 11:10

for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose *architect* and *builder* is God.

"Architect" = *technites* we get our word "technique"... this is the only time it is found in the New Testament... *artisan, designer*... **Builder** is *one who works for the people*... a craftsman... So Abraham was looking for a city that God was the designer and the craftsman who built it... for the people...

It comes from God's mind, His heart and His hands... for His people, us!...no city like this!...Abraham's hope was this ultimate promise of God...Even though Abraham was going to a land God would show him here in earth...Abraham was heavenly minded...His ultimate promised land was heaven.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah some 700 years before John's Revelation...In Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah quoting God declares, "**For behold, I am creating new heavens and a new earth.**" This new creation will be free from sin and corruption, where righteousness will dwell forever..

I find it amazing how many Christians like the idea of heaven, and are glad that heaven will be their final destination after this life... but they like the idea of staying on earth more... oh, they won't exactly admit it...

I hear all the time things like... *heaven will be great, but I'm not ready to go there yet, I've got more things I'd like to do here on earth... like fishing... or go to Hawaii... finish building my*

house and enjoy it for a while...I've got a lot of things I haven't done yet... experienced yet right here on earth.

Really?... To say that is to not understand what eternity in heaven with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will truly be like... there is NOTHING on earth that can come close to comparing with the magnificence of heaven... the complete satisfaction that awaits us in eternity...

The twelve disciples didn't grasp it... Judas had left the other eleven to betray Jesus... the eleven remaining disciples reclined around that table in the upper room with a general feeling of uneasiness... they had been anticipating Jesus setting up His kingdom and they being His right hand "men"... but what they were finding out was a different plan... a plan that included a cross rather than a crown.

What happened to the king that would arrive on a white horse and defeat their oppressor Rome?... *This man we've been following for the last three years came into town on a donkey!*...and now... gathered around this low table... the air was thick... something was getting ready to happen.

John 14

Peter asks *Lord where are you going?*... "*where I go you cannot follow Me now...but you will follow Me later*" ...

Peter—*Why's that?*

Jesus—*I will lay down My life for you.*

Troubling words to eleven men who had other ideas... Jesus sensed their troubled state so He says these great words.

John 14:1 **Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me... In My Father's house are many _____?** Mansions?... sorry... more like apartments... accurately a "dwelling place"... we like to think it will be a mansion because we think heaven is all about us.... But remember it is all about the Lamb...Jesus Christ....

Jesus is going to prepare a place for you to live... **a place for you to live WITH Him!...And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself THAT WHERE I AM there you will be also.**

Don't worry guys... I know this world is a mess... I know you feel like you will be abandoned...I know you are concerned... but know this... I will come again and personally take you to a place that I prepared for you... and we will live together for eternity.

The apostle John wrote all that... John 14... some 60 years before he wrote Revelation 21...Revelation 21 unveils to us that dwelling place in John 14...the place He's prepared for us... and what a dwelling place it is!

I'm going to list out for us seven details about this eternal dwelling place...

Before I do I want to remind us that everything about heaven will be new... back in verse 5 it says **And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold I make all things new"**... Words coming from the throne of God itself... by God Himself...

From the very beginning of history... after the fall in the garden, God has been in the process of renewal and redemption... to restore fellowship between himself and mankind....it's still going on today...God is in the process of making all things new.

The apostle Paul saw that when he wrote 2nd Corinthians 4:16 **Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.... Therefore if anyone is in Christ... he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new...**

What Paul was showing to be true for spiritual man now... is a picture of God's eternal plan... **have you ever thought that the reason God allowed sin into the world.... Allow the destruction of sin...It was in order to do a GREATER work of making all things new?**

We all wish Adam didn't do what he did... we think that had Adam remained "innocent"... without sin... that would be the ultimate... David Guzic comments on this...*We fail to realize that redeemed man is greater than innocent man...that we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam...God's perfect state is one of redemption, not innocence...*

Had Adam not sin... God's grace would never be experienced... neither would the work of the cross of Jesus Christ... *Redemption is not merely a return to innocence; it is a restoration that surpasses the original condition, Through redemption humanity gains a deeper intimacy with God, spiritual maturity and the promise of eternal life....*

So... all things are finally made new!

I said seven things... I had better get on with it...*Origin, Appearance, Exterior, Dimensions, Materials, Distinctiveness and Brilliance.*

1. Origin of the Celestial City

Where's this city come from?

Read verse 9

This bride, the wife of the Lamb we saw last week in verse 2... In the apostle Paul's writings, especially in Ephesians 5... the bride is the church... all believers in Christ... I'm going to suggest that this bride here in verse 9 refers not only to the church... but to include the redeemed in Christ from of all ages...

Both Old Testament and New Testament believers... as we will see more in a minute... we are all one in Christ... and here referred to as the bride of Christ...all the redeemed from all of history...

Notice it doesn't say the bride *inhabits* the city, New Jerusalem...(V.2&9)... it actually says **New Jerusalem IS the bride of the Lamb**... Jesus Christ... a city is not its buildings but its inhabitants... all of the inhabitants of this city, New Jerusalem will be all the redeemed in Christ... it will not be a melting pot of religions and philosophies... so the character of the city is the bride of the Lamb.

Read verse 10

John was on the island Patmos which has no mountains... so he had to be carried away to the mainland... we don't know where... but to a "high mountain"... he's standing there on this mountain... and coming down out of heaven is this massive city.

So the origin of this great city ... which is the place Jesus prepared for us in John 14... is heaven...some think New Jerusalem is already in existence... some view it as where we will go when we die... and eventually it will come down to the new earth....whatever... it's place of origin is heaven.

2. Appearance of the Celestial City

Read verse 11

Two words stand out here... *glory* and *brilliance*...In that great prayer for His Disciples (All disciples in Christ) in John 17:24... Jesus prays to the Father, **Father I desire that they (disciples) whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am** remember, we are going to be with Christ in heaven **so that they may see My glory which You have given Me before the foundation of the world.**

Glory... *doxa*...which here is talking about a visible brightness...light... this light... His glory shines out from this city... all of God's character, attributes come together and shines brightly... the Jews called it His Shekina glory.

Brilliance is the other word... it goes right with glory... for it is God's bright glory that radiates out from the city... brilliance refers to radiating light... think of a light bulb... light radiates out from the center of the bulb... through the outer glass filling the room with light... except here... we're not talking about a thin layer of glass...

It says **a precious stone... as a stone of crystal clear jasper**...Jasper is opaque... it's not clear...*[my theory on these gems—all made new]* most agree this is talking about a very large diamond... and a very costly one at that because it is very clear... the more clear a diamond is the more valuable it is.... And did I say large?

If this glory radiates from the entire city... it's a 1500 mile long diamond! (as we will see).
Diamonds are no longer a girl's best friend.... They are her favorite planet!

3. Exterior of the Celestial City

What's it look like on the outside?...

Read verse 12

Most likely the wall goes the height of the city...we'll get the dimensions later... it has 12 gates... with an angel at each gate... there are name plates on each gate with the 12 tribes of Israel on them...

Read verse 13-14

Now we can picture that this city is a square... the fact that both the 12 tribes are listed and the 12 apostles as well... God's covenant people Israel (God is not finished with Israel!) and God's covenant relationship with His church...

New Jerusalem will be the dwelling place of all the united people of God... Old and New Testament believers... **whose salvation rests on the completed work of Jesus Christ.**

The 12 foundation stones which the walls are built upon are important... two years ago when I went to Israel... I was able to visit the recently excavated foundation stones of the old city... you walk down under the walls and you can see these massive stones... Huge foundation stones...

Some are 5 ft. wide, 4 ft high and 30 ft long... they weigh around 100 tons each... they go down some 14-19 layers below the walls.... I can't imagine the foundations for the New Jerusalem!...

Why walls? There will be no enemies...they represent security, eternal security... we learn later the gates are always open.

4. Dimensions

To get a picture on just how large New Jerusalem will be, compared to Old Jerusalem:

Jerusalem in the time of David—15 acres...1000 to 2000 people.

In the time of Jesus—206 acres...maybe 80,000 people

today—49 sq. miles, 1 million people.

New Jerusalem?

Read verse 15-17

It's a square... but it is a cube... the length in each direction is 12,000 stadia... or 1500 miles... 1500 miles long, high and wide...

That would be like Vancouver, Canada to the border of Mexico, then from Vancouver to Minnesota down to the bottom of Louisiana...or think of it roughly the size of the moon....

Henry Morris—founder of the Institute for Creation Research, started as a Civil Engineer back in the 60's...died 2006...he did some mathematical calculations to get an idea what we're talking about here with the size of New Jerusalem and its relationship to everyone who will be there... all the redeemed.

Now... this is not God's word... this is just an educated guess, crunching some numbers to give us a glimpse... if you look at all the past, present and possible future generations of people on the planet... all the way up to the day Jesus returns... roughly there would have been 100 billion people.

Morris picks a random number of 20% of that 100 billion, came to faith in Jesus Christ...that would be about 20 billion people will be in and live in new Jerusalem... 20 billion!...right now there is about 8 billion people on the entire planet...

20 billion people in new Jerusalem sounds crowded to me... I was thinking heaven was going to give me space...some privacy... Morris doesn't stop there with his educated speculation... New Jerusalem won't be just square miles... it will be "cubical miles"... it will be as high as it is long and wide...

We have to think differently now... a city block will be a cubed block...Morris proposes that there will be avenues going through the city horizontally as well as vertically...this is not crazy... we know that the resurrected Jesus during His last 40 days before His ascension... He had a physical body... but He could go through walls and unopened doors... and when He did leave to go to heaven... He ascended... and we will be like Him!

Morris calculated that 1500 miles in all directions of the cube will yield plenty of housing space for the 20 billion people...each persons cube would be about 75 acres... *That's great ! Finally I can have life to myself, complete privacy!*

No... all the walls and everything else are transparent!... everybody can see everything!

Verse 17 says the walls are 144 cubits... that would be 216 feet thick...verse 18 tells us **And the material of the wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold, like pure glass...**the same description is in verse 21...**the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**

This is interesting gold!...our gold is opaque... the gold in heaven will be transparent like glass...what we are seeing is that the glory of God is going to shine through every wall... every street... even the foundations of the walls... everything is going to be transparent...like glass.

No privacy!...You know... we won't want privacy because we won't need privacy...what is *under* our desire for privacy?...

- Desire for autonomy... we want our individuality... our rights our space...

- Protection from harm... that's good, that's why we have walls and doors and locks... but heaven will have nothing that harms!
- Our psychological well-being... people everywhere the world is closing in on us!
- Respect for the self...*this is mine!*
- Power and control...*this is MY space*
- Hiding secrets
- Personal freedom

What's under all those?... Really...it is an obsession of the self!... We can't imagine new Jerusalem...because our world is all about "me"... all about "I"...MY house...MY car... My money... MY space... My possessions...MY privacy... MY rights...My happiness... the curse is removed in heaven (22:3)... we won't even know people are watching...we won't care... they won't be focused on you... they will be focused on the Lamb!...and so will you! ...We will be like Adam and Eve when they were created... they were naked and not ashamed... they didn't even know they were naked... totally unaware of themselves....CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW FREEING THAT WILL BE WHEN IT WON'T BE ALL ABOUT YOU?

5. Materials of the Celestial City

New Jerusalem will be stunningly beautiful... every precious stone will be woven through the city...and God's glory will be shining through all of it.... God will lavish His beauty on the city He is preparing for His people..

There's a verse in 1 Peter 4:10 that I never connected to heaven... Peter is talking about the varied spiritual gifts of believers...each one of us has a gift... so Peter writes...**As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God—**

Interesting that he used the word manifold in describing the grace of God...manifold literally means "many colored"... "variegated"...God's grace is multicolored!...did Peter have heaven in mind when he wrote that?.

Verse 19...**The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone...** building foundations are usually underground... but these foundations will not only be visible... but beautifully garnished with these precious stones...

Read verses 19b-20

What stands out to me are the gates made of pearls...in ancient times, these Bible times, all these gems were certainly valuable...but it was the pearl that was considered a "royal gem"...

Read verse 21a

Now you know where we get the term “pearly gates”...they really will be pearly gates!... did you catch how immense these pears are?... each gate will be one single pearl!... *the mother of all oysters!*

There will be 12 of these gates, three on each side of the “cube”... if the walls are 1500 miles high... the gates would be in proportion maybe?... those are some large pearls!... all but three of my 10 commentaries say that pearls this size is an impossibility that they are simply symbolic... *the “pearl gates” are best understood as a metaphor for the pure, precious, and exclusive access to God’s presence, rather than a description of a specific, measurable gate size... ... the largest pearl ever found was the Giga Pearl weighing just under 61 lbs...*

So do we conclude in that God is the builder of heaven a 1500-mile-tall pearl is an impossibility?... just talkin!

Literal or symbolic, it certainly is loaded with symbolism... consider this by John Phillips

How appropriate. All other precious gems are metals or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster. The only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster received an irritation or a wound. and around the offending article that has penetrated and hurt it, the oyster builds a pearl. The pearl, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it.

The glory land is God's answer in Christ. to wicked men who crucified heaven's bel and put him to open shame. How like God it is to make the gate to the New Jerusalem of pearl The saints, as they come and go, will be forever reminded as they pass the gates of glory that access to God's home is only because of Calvary. Think of the size of those gates. Think of the supernatural pearls from which they are made. What gigantic suffering is symbolized by those gates of pearl. Throughout the endless ages, we shall be reminded by those pearly gates of the immensity of the sufferings of Christ, those pearls.

Hung eternally at the access routes to glory, will remind us forever of one who hung upon a tree and whose answer to those who injured him was to invite them to share his home.

6. Distinctiveness of the Celestial City

We’ve seen the outside... what’s inside?... we know the streets are made of gold... by the way... most believe gold streets are symbolic as well... one commentator said *If it bothers you there will be no gold streets in heaven, you aint going to heaven...* I don’t know about that!... and I don’t have a problem with gold streets in heaven either!

But what else is inside?... well...there are some things not inside:

Read verse 22

No temple!... Where are we going to worship?...where’s the church building?... where is the temple?... the cathedral?... the chapel?

In heaven it won't be *where* we will worship but *who* we will worship!...*Almighty God and the Lamb Jesus Christ are its sanctuary!*..we won't need to go anywhere to worship...we will be in the presence of God at all times!....

Now...we separate the secular with the sacred... we go to work in the world on Monday through Friday and do secular things.... Then we go to church on Sunday and do sacred things... **sacred and secular will be indistinguishable in heaven!**...all will be sacred.

7. Brilliance of the Celestial City

Read verse 23

The glory of God will fill the entire city... we will see all things through His glory!... it will never be dark again... Isaiah hundreds of years before John wrote these words said it well:

Isaiah 60:19

**No longer will you have the sun for light by day,
Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;
But you will have Yahweh for an everlasting light,
And your God for your glory.**

Apparently there will be nations and kings...

Read verses 24-27

I'm not sure exactly what this refers to... I would think nations and kings would be a thing of the past.

"Nations" translated from the Greek "ethnos" which means "people"... In that the only people in New Jerusalem will be glorified beings... these "nations" cannot be the concept of nations today...

My best guess...the "**nations**" and "**kings of the earth**" represent the redeemed peoples and rulers from every nation (all of us!) who bring their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem....all the redeemed will be kings in heaven...

1 Peter 2:9 – **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

Romans 8:17 – **“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”**
Our redemption makes us heirs and co-heirs with Christ, sharing in His glory

Revelation 5:10

And You made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign upon the earth.”

Ephesians 2:1 - 2:10

And you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,³ among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,**⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;⁹ not of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**