

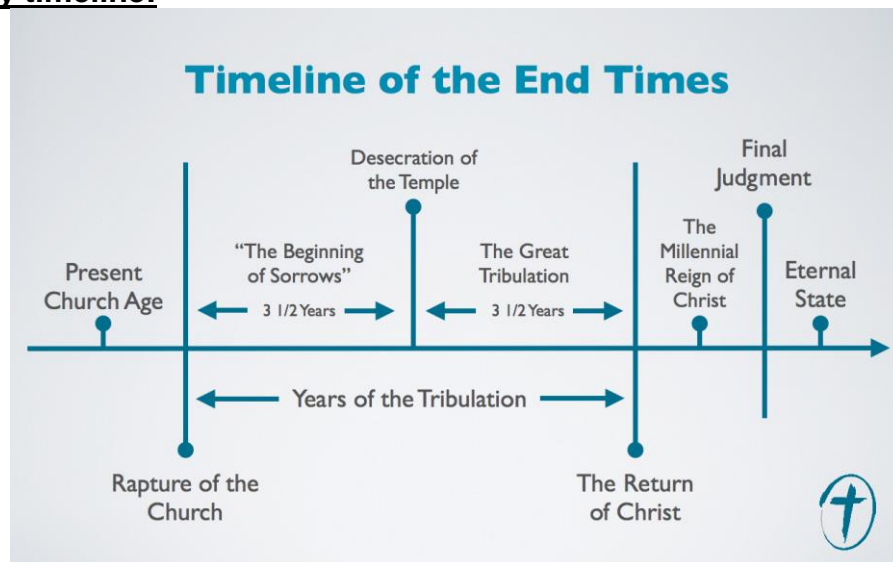
Revelation 21, 9-27 “The New Jerusalem, What it Looks Like”

1.30.19

Over the next several weeks we’re going to talk about Heaven. The topics:

- What It Will Be Like to See God?
- Who Gets Into Heaven?
- What is Heaven Like Today?
- What About the Children?
- What Will We Do in Heaven?

Tonight is somewhat of an introductory message as we come to chapter 21 of our study of the Book of the Revelation. What a fascinating journey it’s been! What have we seen? Take a look at **our handy-dandy timeline:**



Tonight, we’re going to see the place where we’re going to live for all eternity. We’re going to see the Father’s house...also known as the New Jerusalem...the place where the Bride of Christ will be brought into our eternal home. It is the place Jesus went away to prepare for us, His bride. He said as much in the upper room at the Last Supper in John 14:1-3. See the screens...

John 14:1-3

¹“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

This is that place...the New Jerusalem...the place prepared for the Bride. And that’s how the New Jerusalem is described...like a bride. Look at Revelation 21 now...verses 1-3 with me (Matthew taught these verses a while back)...

Revelation 21:1-3

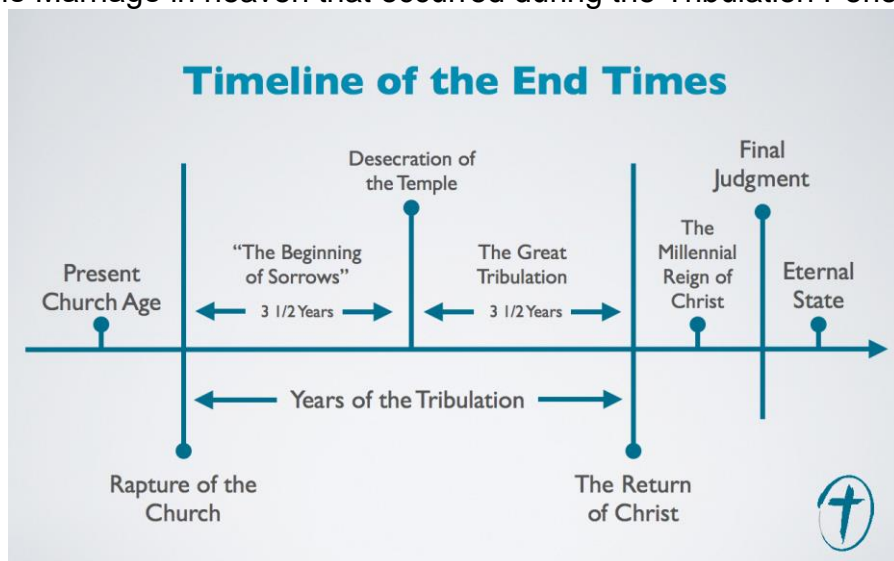
¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, 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.

Church family...WHO are we? How are we described in Scripture...We are the BRIDE OF CHRIST, and the Apostle John indicates this again in verse 9.

Revelation 21:9

⁹Then 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."

There's that word again: "Bride." It continues to be used by the Holy Spirit to describe us...the SAVED the REDEEMED...those who have given our lives to the Groom...Jesus Christ. Even now...well after the Marriage in heaven that occurred during the Tribulation Period on earth...



we're still called the Bride. Is this by accident? No! Because there are no accidents in Scripture. Never forget...the Word of God is perfectly described to us from the mind of God...theo-nustos...God breathed to us (we talked about that last week).

Let me show you a contrast for a moment. **Turn to Revelation 17**. I want to show you the opposite of the Bride in Scripture. (Don't worry...we will get to our text...but honestly...the descriptions we're going to read about tonight in verses 9-27 of the New Jerusalem are pretty much self-explanatory). What we're going to see described in chapter 17 (which we saw several weeks ago in our study) is THE HARLOT, or PROSTITUTE and she is the antithesis...(the opposite) of the Bride.

Church family, the contrast between the Bride of Rev. 21 and the Harlot of Chapter 17 is absolutely striking. Revelation 17 is a description of the religious system that will be used by the Antichrist to help him gain power and status during the Tribulation Period, as he sets up a one-world government, one-world economy and one-world religion. The PROSTITUTE is false religion. The BRIDE is true religion. To put this in perspective...again, this is all happening during the 7-year Tribulation Period.

Now watch this play out...

Revelation 17:1-3

¹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." ³And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness,

and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

So, we have a prostitute and a Bride. Think about it: Of all the ways God could have chosen to describe False Religion and His True Church...He used the analogy of a prostitute and a Bride. Hey church family, BTW...if you don't think marriage and the institution of marriage is important to Jesus...then just look at how He describes us for all eternity...His wife, the Bride. And this is why the attack on marriage and what it means and how it's presented is insidiously anti-God, if marriage is defined in any other way than is defined by God...in HIS WORD. Listen, to redefine marriage is to redefine how God describes us...His Bride...His Church.

Remember how the Bible describes marriage...

Ephesians 5:25-27

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

And we see this truth...back in Rev. 21... Go back there now, verse 9. Here we are in the Eternal State...and we're still called the Bride and now we see our eternal home...the New Jerusalem, and as we read, I want you to note the contrast between the prostitute in the wilderness and the Bride, who we'll see from a mountain. (We're climbing mountains around here you know! ☺)

Revelation 21:9-17

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.

Let me ask you a question, Church family. Can we take what we just read literally...or is it all figurative...symbolic? Is John really describing a city...a dwelling place that encapsulates the Father's House with many rooms as a literal place...or is all of this just figurative, symbolic. You know scholars differ on this. Some scholars say the entire book of Revelation is figurative and symbolic and you can't take any of it literally. Others say the opposite. And some fall in between.

Church family this is important and we need to once again, broach an important topic...a topic called: HERNENEUTICS, the Study of the Bible so we can try to understand what we're reading. Again, the question is: Are we literally talking about 12 literal gates in a wall that is 216' thick within a city that is 1,400 miles cube? Well let me ask you about verse 17, again? Look at it again...

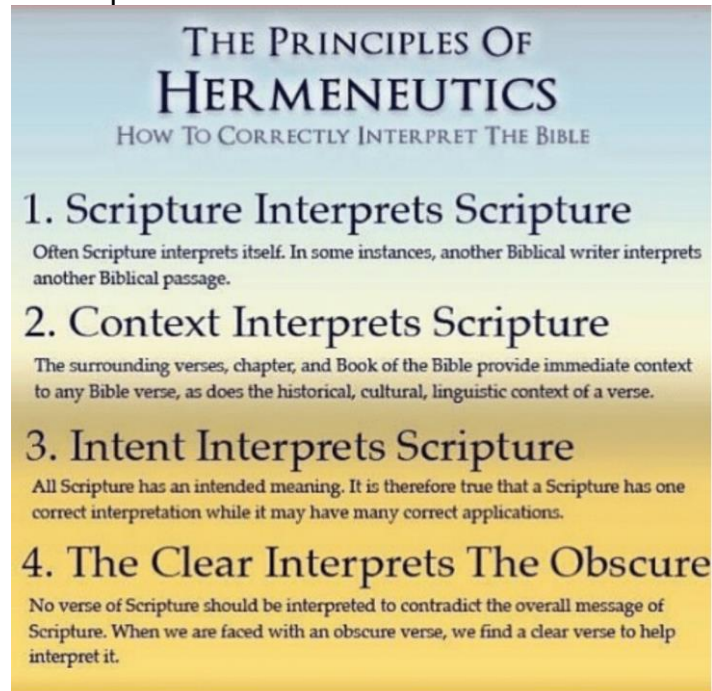
Revelation 21:17

¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.

Is the angel's measurements our measurements? I believe it is and I don't believe we need to spiritualize it.

Listen carefully... I believe we can take these measurements literally. I could say it to you this way...(and this is not original with me) *If the plain sense, makes sense, you need no other sense, because you could end up with nonsense.* But, here's a caveat. We might have to dig a bit. The bible contains several genres of writing, some of which include: historical narrative (the Chronicles, the book of Acts), didactic literature (straight forward teaching...the Teaching Epistles of NT), wisdom literature (Proverbs), prophetic literature (12 major and minor prophets of OT...fore-telling or forth-telling), apocalyptic literature (imagery soaked, Daniel and Book of the Rev.), and poetry (Psalms).

I want to remind us of the Principles of Hermeneutics:



Now, there can be overlap of these various types or genres of Scripture. For instance, in the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...the majority of what we find are Historical Narratives: descriptions about the life of Jesus...historical facts...but, within those Gospels are parables/stories that aren't historical...because they are stories made up by Jesus to illustrate a point. And even within the Gospels we have descriptions we don't take literally...for instance we know Jesus is not a LAMB, even though He is indeed described figuratively by the John the Baptist, his cousin, as the LAMB OF GOD. So, there can be an overlap of styles of that which is literal and figurative.

What's my point? My point is...in the Book of the Revelation, I believe you have both. You have descriptions of things you can take literally like measured walls and dimensions of a literal city and literal time periods like 7 years (the Tribulation Period) or 1,000 years (the Millennial Kingdom). But, you also have figurative language like a Beast (which we know is the antichrist) with 10 horns

and seven heads... Do you think the antichrist is going 10 horns and seven heads? No...he's be some character out of some grotesque Hollywood horror movie...no...that's symbolic describing his power and authority he'll have on the earth.

Listen...to correctly interpret Scripture...any Scripture...any of the 66 books of the Bible...we must look at that Scripture in context. No, Jesus is not a lamb with wool and hooved feet. He is the God/man, who was born, just like you and me...but, He is the Lamb of God in that a perfect human being had to shed His blood to make payment or atonement for our sin. Let me ask you something...do you believe Jesus will come back to this earth riding on a white horse at the end of the Battle of Armageddon, as described in Revelation 19, or do you believe all of that is symbolic?

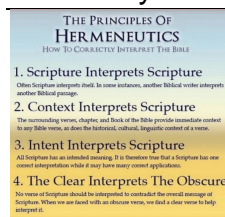
For me...I have no problem believing that Jesus will come back to this on a white horse...just as I believe He had no problem riding on a donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Look...if Jesus could say, "Let there be light" and there was light... If He could place the stars in their orbits in heaven...I have no problem believing He could create a horse that can ride through space!

So, can we take what we're reading here in Revelation 21 literally? Literal streets? Literal walls? Literal people? I believe, yes we can! You may feel otherwise and that's okay... I won't disfellowship with you and I hope you won't with me. But, if the plain sense, makes sense, you need no other sense. **Again, I know I'm taking a bit of time on this...but, this conversation is really going to set up the next 4 or 5 messages,** so this is critical.

One other thought...if you choose to take what we read in Revelation is ALL Figurative language with SUBJECTIVE meaning...then whose interpretation do we go with? Do you know what happens with subjective, figurative interpretation this is open to the mind of all the readers of time...where it means what you want it to mean? Well, it could be like this:

- The river that we'll read about next week in Revelation 22:1, that comes from the throne of God, which is in the New Jerusalem, well...it's not literal river...no let's go with...it's a river of God's grace.
- Tree of Life that we'll read about is not a real tree...no...we'll say that tree represents...God's strength...and let's say the city walls of the New Jerusalem (which we just read about) is really only indicative of God's protection over us, or maybe it's symbolic of some other attribute of God.

What do you want it to mean? See it again:



Oh, there is great danger in choosing to interpret things the way we like. You see, once we allow symbolism and allegory and figurative interpretation to reign, then we get to "make up" or decide what we want the Bible to mean. And folks, there's a lot of people doing that today.

That's what we talked about earlier regarding marriage. Marriage is not what "WE" the created say it is...it's what the Bible says it is. We don't get to reinterpret Scripture. This is how cults are started and built and people begin to look for "hidden meanings," which conveniently correspond to whatever that "expert" or "Bible leader" want you or others to believe...and let me tell you...this is happening in many of the mainline Protestant denominations as we speak. They say, "Oh...that's

not what the Bible means on that subject a long time ago...but, no...here's what WE say it means TODAY." (Subject matters like marriage, sex, gender, sin.) OH, WE DON'T get that choice!

People end up doing exactly what the Apostle John via the Holy Spirit tells us not to do in Revelation 22.

Revelation 22:18-19

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

So, as we finish tonight and we move forward in the weeks ahead, we will seek to do all we can to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and allow it to simply mean what it says.

Now let's look at the remainder of this beautiful chapter... This will go quickly...because I believe it's self-explanatory...

Revelation 21:18

¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

How might that look...



or this



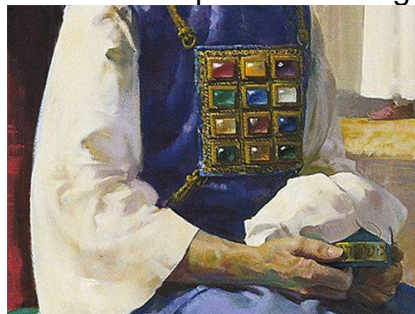
Revelation 21:19-21

¹⁹The 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.

How might all of this look



Interestingly, the stones are similar to the breastplate of the High Priest:



Revelation 21:22-26

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.

Take a look at this picture of the various nations of the earth...



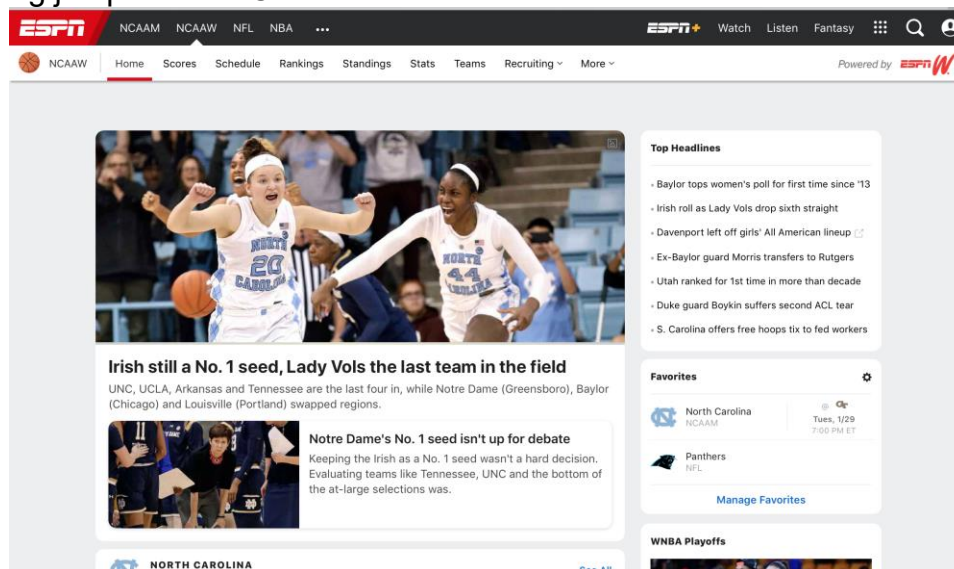
That's heaven folks...the nations (the people...the way they looked on this earth, just like Jesus did in His glorified body...He was recognized by the apostles and His followers after the resurrection).

But this place...the New Jerusalem is limited to only those who are part of the bride...those who have given their lives to the Groom...this is a prepared place for a prepared people...

Revelation 21:27

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.

Can I tell you how overwhelmed I am that I'm going to get to go to have a room in the Father's House, the New Jerusalem one day? I'm overwhelmed that I'm REDEEMED! Do I get excited about going on a vacation...or my daughter playing a beautiful piece on her violin, or even my niece, hitting a big jump shot for Carolina...



knocking off the #1 Team in the Country...YES!!!

But a trip to the New Jerusalem? Oh my! To see Jesus! To be at peace...no more mourning or crying or pain or trouble! Oh my, indeed!