

A MESSAGE OF HOPE FROM DR. JACK VAN IMPE

Revelation 21: 9 - 27

Verse 9: *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

Here one member of the angelic host which administered the final seven judgments now speaks to John, saying, "Come here. I want to show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife, the one who *made herself ready* [in] *fine linen, clean and white* (chapter 19, verses 7 and 8) and who returns with Him for the 1,000-year honeymoon (chapter 19, verses 11 through 16)." At this point the Bride is envisioned in her final resting place.

Verse 10: *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*

The Bride is pictured as the city of the New Jerusalem because a city is composed of people. Buildings, streets, and light are but aids to the residents. For example, one refers to a city as "clean" or "wicked." Why? Because of its people. Now, as John views God's heavenly creation, he is impressed by (1) the brilliance of the city (verses 9-14), (2) the size of the city (verses 15-17), and (3) the beauty of the city (verses 18-21). He describes the city as...

Verse 11: *Having the glory of God and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

Verse 12: *And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:*

Verse 13: *On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

Verse 14: *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

In Bible times walls were erected for protection. However, since war is forever finished, one may question the presence of this wall in the New Jerusalem. The answer? It serves as a reminder that the God of love protected His people while on earth. This wall is an eternal memorial to the fact that our lives have been hidden *with Christ in God* (Colossians 3:3).

The city also has twelve gates, each inscribed with one of the names of the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel.

The gates are staffed with angels who welcome those possessing the right and privilege of entering the city (chapter 22, verse 14). The twelve angels standing at these entrances are possibly those who worked jointly with each tribe during the earthly sojourn of the people of Israel. We also note that, just as the gates are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes, the foundations of the wall itself contain the names of Christ's twelve apostles. Next let's consider the size of the city.

Verse 15: *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.*

Verse 16: *And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

Verse 17: *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.*

The angel measures the city with a golden reed or measuring rod. Since the streets are composed of gold and the city is pure gold as well (verse 18), a gold yardstick is appropriate. (It's a good thing that thieves are excluded-I Corinthians 6: 10-otherwise heaven's freeways would disappear!)

Verse 16 informs us that the New Jerusalem is tetragonal, or foursquare in shape. The city is a perfect cube because its width, length, and height are equal. In fact, the angel discovers its dimensions to be 12,000 furlongs wide, long, and high. Most scholars believe this to be a distance of 1,500 miles. Dr. A. C. Gaebelein says, "Twelve thousand furlongs constitutes fifteen hundred miles." Seiss states: "The golden city is 1,500 miles square; for 12,000 stadia make 1,500 miles."

Placed over the United States of America, the heavenly city would extend from the northernmost point of Maine to the southernmost point of Florida and from the eastern seaboard to Colorado. In fact, the major cities of the world are mere villages in comparison with the New Jerusalem.

Because it also extends 1,500 miles upward into space, it could literally contain every person who has ever been born, plus additional billions as well.

The wall extends around the city and is approximately 216 feet in height, for a cubit is the distance from the elbow to the end of the middle finger (approximately eighteen inches).

Now let's look into the magnificent beauty of God's Holy City.

Verse 18: *And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

Verse 19: *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;*

Verse 20: *The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoberyl; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

Verse 21: *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

Wow! Notice first that the wall of jasper represents Christ, in His radiant glory, surrounding His saints. Next the pure gold city typifies the righteousness of God's holy nature, and then the precious colorful stones-startlingly brilliant-picture the Lord's attributes as well as various aspects of His redemptive work.

Imagine the scene when the light of the city-the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 23)-shines through the brilliancy of these stones! When John's vision becomes a reality-then and only then-we will begin to understand the term *the glory of God!*

The beautiful city also pictures the saints of all ages joined together in love, for the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are coupled with the names of the apostles. This means that all of God's people from all dispensations have finally been joined together in one truly ecumenical brotherhood. No longer will we be Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Nazarenes, or Presbyterians. Instead, we will be united brethren! What a glorious day when we lay aside eternally the tags that so often divide us.

Verse 22: *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

On earth, God always had a dwelling place—a temple or tabernacle—where men could come to worship and commune with Him. Such a place is no longer needed, for the tabernacle of God is now with men. He has chosen to dwell with them (chapter 21, verse 3).

Verse 23: *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*

While on earth, Jesus said, *I am the light of the world* (John 8:12). Now, in the eternal city, Christ, in all His radiant splendor and glory, shines forth so magnificently that darkness becomes an impossibility. No wonder there shall be no night there!

Verse 24: *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

Verse 25: *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

Verse 26: *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*

These verses undoubtedly picture the multitudes who came through the Millennium as born-again, regenerated believers. They did not follow Satan in the final rebellion upon his release from the bottomless pit. Therefore, they entered the eternal state in bodies of flesh. Their rulers, kings, and presidents—also born again and still living in earthly bodies—now bring their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem as well. They come to praise Him who is all in all. As they arrive, there is no fear of assassination, recrimination, terrorism, or robbery. Such events are no longer possible. God is present. Satan is destroyed. Temptation is forever past. Thus, the gates of the city are never locked. Security is needless in the land of eternal day where there is no night. At this point, however, the warning flag is again lifted.

Verse 27: *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*