

# The Revelation

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Revelation 21:9-27

Vs. 9-10a

- The angel that now comes to John must have been a bit of a surprise. This was one of the seven angels holding bowls filled with God's wrath, bowls filled with horrors (Ch. 16). The next time we see one of these seven angels is in Ch. 17 where he comes to John with an invitation to see "the judgement of the great harlot." Now more than 1000 years have passed and one of the seven comes to John again, but this time it is not to bring horror or have John witness terrible judgement, but rather he comes to show John a vision of pure and glorious joy: the bride, the wife of the Lamb! It would seem that angels act with unquestioning obedience to God. Whether bringing good tidings of great joy or unleashing horrific plagues, angels speak and act purely at God's direction.
- As when Ezekiel was shown a vision of a new Temple (40:2), the angel carries John to a high mountain. Such a position would enable John to see everything and high mountains (such as Sinai) have always been thought to be close to God.

Vss. 10b-11

- Here the "bride of Christ" which heretofore had always meant the Church now is attached to the New Jerusalem "whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10), thus unifying all true believers in God from throughout the ages.
- "...having the glory of God" always carries a connotation of light (Ex. 24:17; Matt. 17:2). Here too John tries to describe the glory that shown from the city. The Greek word translated here as "jasper" is "iaspis" which means a translucent stone. Think then of seeing a city that shown like a giant diamond.

## Vss. 12-14

- John now begins to describe the city he is seeing, the New Jerusalem, the City of God. He begins with the outer wall. God told Zechariah that He would be the wall of the New Jerusalem and the glory in her midst” (Zech. 2:5). Walls for ancient cities were there for defense, but that is not the case here. All enemies have been vanquished.
- The wall had 12 gates, three for each side, and an angel at each gate. Gates served as the entrance to a city. Here then multiple gates are open in each direction for all of Gods people to come from every direction.
- To further demonstrate the unity of faith between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between AD and BC, we find that on the 12 gates are written he names of the 12 tribes of the 12 sons of Israel. Further there are also the 12 foundation stones and on the foundation stones were the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. So the wall’s key features, its gates and foundations bring together the continuous thread of faith from the beginning of our story with God to the present.

## Vss. 15-21

- The angel acting as John’s guide holds a measuring rod, as did the angel in Zechariah CH. 2. The city is measured 3-dimensionally: length, width, and height. The first two dimensions form a perfect square, but it is an enormous square, some 1,500 miles in length and width, some 2,250,000 square miles. God’s city is big enough for all His people.
- But the angel’s measurements also include height and the height is equal to the length and width, so in effect, the city is a cube. More to the point, the city is the very shape of the Holy of Holies in the center of the Great Temple, the place where God was to reside. The whole city is now the dwelling place of God and He is not hidden, there is no veil, but is *with* His people.

- The angel then measures the height of the wall. Compared to the other dimensions, a wall 72 yards high (216 feet) is not very imposing. Nor is it imposing when compared to other ancient walls. But again, the wall is not for defense. All hostile forces have been forever destroyed. The wall exists to provide a foundation for the city and to bring order, which God builds in to all He creates.
- The wall has the appearance of clear jasper/diamond as previously described, but the city looks more like pure gold, “like clear glass”. There are no solid walls as there is no longer a need for privacy. Herod’s Great Temple had gold plates covering its eastern door from top to bottom, so that when the sunrise hit the door its brilliance would be seen for many miles. What John is seeing is far beyond what human hands can do.
- Next John returns to the foundation stones on which the names of the 12 apostles are written. Each stone is made of a precious gem. Of these William Barclay says:  
 “In the city of God these foundation stones were all precious stones. The jasper was not the modern opaque jasper but a translucent rock crystal, green in color. The sapphire appears in the Old Testament story as the stone of the paving on which God stood ([Exodus 24:10](#)). Again, it was not the modern sapphire. Pliny describes it as sky-blue, flecked with gold. It was most likely the stone now known as lapis lazuli. The chalcedony was a green silicate of copper, found in mines near Chalcedon. It is described as being like the sheen of green on a dove's neck or in a peacock's tail. The emerald was the modern emerald, which Pliny describes as the greenest of all green stones. The sardonyx was an onyx in which the white was broken by layers of red and brown; it was specially used for cameos. The sard or carnelian took its name from Sardis. It was blood-red and was the commonest of all stones used for engraving gems. The identification of the chrysolite is uncertain. Its Hebrew name means the stone of Tarshish. Pliny describes it as shining with a golden radiance. It could be a yellow beryl or a gold-colored jasper. The beryl was like

- an emerald; the best stones were sea-blue or sea-green. The topaz was a transparent, greenish-gold stone, very highly valued by the Hebrews. Job speaks of the topaz of Ethiopia ([Job 28:19](#)). (Chrysoprase is a type of chalcedony). The jacinth is described by ancient writers as being a violet, bluish-purple stone. It is likely that it was the equivalent of the modern sapphire. The amethyst is described as being very similar to the jacinth, but more brilliant.”
- There is something curious about the order that John gives of the stones. First, the list is basically the same list given in Ex. 28:17-21 for the arrangement of jewels on the breastplate of the high priest, but in reverse order. Second, it is also the list of stones associated with the signs of the zodiac, but it too is in reverse order of the zodiac’s stones. Remember, ancient people had strong beliefs that the stars directed people’s lives, many still do. Why did the magi come looking for the new King of the Jews? Because they saw His star! Perhaps, what we are to see in this list is that God is Lord of our lives and our worship, and as always He takes what we think we know and turns it upside down. “You have heard it said, but I say to you...”
  - Each of the 12 gates was made of pearl. The pearl was the ancient world’s most valued stone. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a pearl of great value that one would sell all that he has to obtain. But remember that a pearl is made by a living creature who is wounded by something and makes something precious and beautiful out of its pain and suffering. How appropriate that pearl would be gate of entrance to God’s city.

#### Vss. 22-27

- Here John is struck by what is *not* in God’s city. This is the New Jerusalem but there is no Temple, the center piece of the old Jerusalem. But there is no need for the whole city is the Holy of Holies. The focus of worship is not a place but the person of God the Father and the Lamb, His son Jesus Christ. When God and His people are together, this is the church.

- Nor is there a sun or a moon. The light of God's glory provides all of the city's illumination (Is. 60:19-20). Only when things are seen in the light of God can Truth really be seen, really be known.
- Nor are there any borders of nations, races, languages (Is. 2:2-4; Jer. 16:19; Daniel 7:13-14). All the nations will come into God's city and the kings of the earth will come and see how puny their glory is beside the glory of God (Phil. 2:9-11).
- Nor is there any night, for God's glory always shines. Nighttime has always been a time of fear, a time for evil. Now there is no night, there is no fear, there is no evil. The ultimate Enlightenment.
- Nor do the gates ever close. God's city is always open for His people. HIS people. Ancient gates were closed at night for protection and to keep out marauders and invaders who seek to do harm. But no such forces exist here. There is nothing evil or unclean. Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be found in God's City, the New Jerusalem.