

Revelation 22:9-22:5

I. Introduction

- a. John view of heaven's capital includes several features: its general appearance, exterior design, internal character, and the privileges of its inhabitants.

II. ITS GENERAL APPEARANCE

- a. (21:9–11)
- b. As the vision opened, an angel appeared to call John's attention to the city.
- c. The last appearance of an angel was one thousand years earlier at the beginning of the Millennium (20:1).
- d. Angels play a significant role in Revelation, and this particular angel was involved in the Tribulation judgments.
- e. Those judgments unfolded in three telescoping series: the seal, trumpet, and, climactically, the bowl judgments.
- f. This angel was **one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues** (cf. 15:1).
 - i. Either he or another of those **seven angels** also introduced the impending judgment of the harlot city of Babylon (17:1), making the contrast between the two cities apparent.
- g. Inaugurating John's personal tour of heaven's capital city, the angel **came and spoke with** the apostle, **saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."**
- h. New Jerusalem is described as a **bride** because it draws its character from its occupants.

- i. Those occupants consist of the **bride** of the **Lamb**, a title originally given to the church (19:7), but now enlarged to encompass all the redeemed of all the ages, who live there forever.
 - ii. The New Jerusalem is likened to a **bride** because the redeemed are forever united to God and the Lamb.
 - iii. It is further defined as **the wife of the Lamb** because the marriage has taken place (19:7).
- i. John's incredible vision began when the angel **carried him away in the Spirit**.
 - i. When he received the visions that comprise the book of Revelation, the aged apostle was a prisoner of the Romans on the island of Patmos (1:9).
 - ii. But he was transported from there in an amazing spiritual journey to see what unaided human eyes could never see. John's visions were not dreams, but spiritual realities, like those Paul saw when he was also caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2–4).
 - j. The first stop was **a great and high mountain**.
 - i. From that vantage point, the angel **showed John the holy city, Jerusalem**.
 - ii. The apostle repeats his observation from verse 2 that the New Jerusalem came **down out of heaven from God**.
 - iii. It should be noted that what is described here is not the creation of heaven; it is merely the descent of what already existed from eternity

past, and is now situated in the center of the new heaven and the new earth.

- k. The most distinguishing characteristic of the capital city of eternity is that it is the throne of the eternal, almighty One, and therefore had **the glory of God** in it.
- l. That **glory** will reach its fullest expression there (John 17:24); it will be unlimited and unconfined, flashing from that city throughout the re-created universe.
- m. The **glory of God** is the sum total of His attributes and is manifested as blazing light and in His Son.
 - i. Radiating from the New Jerusalem will be the brilliance of the full manifestation of God's glory, so much so that "the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (v. 23).
- n. Describing the effect of God's glory radiating from the new Jerusalem, John notes that **her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.**
 - i. To John, the heavenly city appeared like a giant lightbulb, with the brilliant light of God's glory streaming out of it. But that light did not shine through the thin glass of a lightbulb, but through what looked to John **like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.**
 - ii. The city appeared to the apostle like one gigantic precious stone.

- iii. **Jasper** does not refer to the modern stone of the same name, which is opaque; it is a transliteration of the Greek word *iaspis*, which describes a translucent stone.
- iv. The word **jasper** in this passage is best understood as referring to a diamond, a **very costly** one because it is **crystal-clear** and unblemished.
- v. Heaven's capital city is thus pictured as a huge, flawless diamond, refracting the brilliant, blazing glory of God throughout the new heaven and the new earth.

III. Its Exterior Design.

a. 21:12–21a

b. Human language is inadequate to fully describe the unimaginable magnificence of the believers' indescribable eternal home.

- i. Unwilling to take the language of Scripture at face value, many seek for some hidden meaning behind John's description.
- ii. But if the words do not mean what they say, who has the authority to say what they do mean?
- iii. Abandoning the literal meaning of the text leads only to baseless, groundless, futile speculation. The truth about the heavenly city is more than is described, but not less and not different from what is described.
- iv. It is a material creation, yet so unique as to be unimaginable to us.
- v. The words of John provide all the detail we have been given by God to excite our hope.

- c. That the city **had a great and high wall** indicates that it is not a formless, hazy, floating place.
 - i. It has specific dimensions; it has limits; it can be entered and left through its **twelve gates**.
- d. **At those gates twelve angels** were stationed, to attend to God's glory and to serve His people (cf. Heb. 1:14).
 - i. The **gates had names ... written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel**, celebrating for all eternity God's covenant relationship with Israel, the people of the promises, the covenants, the Scriptures, and the Messiah.
 - ii. They were arranged symmetrically; **there were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west**.
 - iii. That arrangement is reminiscent of the way the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle (Num. 2), and of the allotment of the tribal lands around the millennial temple (Ezek. 48).
- e. The massive **wall of the city** was anchored by **twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb**.
 - i. Those **stones** commemorate God's covenant relationship with the church, of which the apostles are the foundation (Eph. 2:20).
 - ii. At the top of each gate was the name of one of the tribes of Israel; at the bottom of each gate was the name of one of the apostles.
 - iii. Thus, the layout of the city's gates pictures God's favor on all His redeemed people, both those

under the old covenant, and those under the new covenant.

- f. Then a curious thing occurred. The angel **who spoke with John had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.**
 - i. This interesting event is reminiscent of the measuring of the millennial temple (Ezek. 40:3ff.) and the measuring of the Tribulation temple (11:1).
 - ii. The significance of all three measurements is that they mark out what belongs to God.
- g. The results of the angel's measuring revealed that **the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles** (lit. "12,000 *stadia*"; a *stadion* was about 607 feet. Thus, the city walls are about 1,380 miles in each direction); **its length and width and height are equal.**
- h. Some commentators have suggested that the city is in the shape of a pyramid. It is best seen as a cube, however, as Henry M. Morris points out: Such an interpretation is quite forced, however, the language of the passage being much more naturally understood to mean a cube, with the length and breadth and height all the same.... The pyramidal shape ... (whether as in Egypt, Mexico, or the stepped-towers of practically all ancient nations), seems always to have been associated with paganism, with the pyramid's apex being dedicated to the worship of the sun, or of the host of heaven. The first such structure was the Tower of Babel, and the Bible always later condemns worship

carried in high places (Leviticus 26:30) whether these were simply natural high hills or artificially constructed hills in the form of a pyramid or ziggurat. The cube ... was the shape specified by God for the holy place ... in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:20), where God was to "dwell" between the cherubim. Both the language and the symbology thus favor the cubical, rather than the pyramidal, shape. (*The Revelation Record* [Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1983], 450)

- i. Morris also points out that a cube-shaped city is well suited for the existence of glorified beings: It should also be remembered that the new bodies of the resurrected saints will be like those of angels, no longer limited by gravitational or electromagnetic forces as at present. Thus it will be as easy for the inhabitants to travel vertically as horizontally, in the new Jerusalem. Consequently, the "streets" of the city (verse 21) may well include vertical passageways as well as horizontal avenues, and the "blocks" could be real cubical blocks, instead of square areas between streets as in a present-day earthly city. (*The Revelation Record*, 451)
- ii. Based on certain assumptions about the design of the city and the number of the redeemed who will live in it, Morris calculates that each person's "cube" would be approximately seventy-five acres on each side (*The Revelation Record*, 451).
- iii. Were that city to be superimposed on the present-day United States, it would extend from Canada

to the Gulf of Mexico, and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean (*The Revelation Record*, 450).

- i. Obviously, God will design the new Jerusalem with plenty of room for all the redeemed (cf. John 14:2–3).
- j. The angel next **measured** the city’s wall at **seventy-two yards** (most likely its thickness).
 - i. Then, as if to emphasize that the city’s dimensions are literal and not mystical, John adds the parenthetical footnote that those dimensions were given **according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.**
 - ii. A yard is a yard, a foot is a foot, and a mile is a mile, whether for humans or angels.
- k. The **material** that the massive city **wall** was made out of **was jasper**—the same diamond-like stone mentioned in verse 11.
 - i. Not only was the wall translucent, but also **the city itself was pure gold, like clear glass.**
 - ii. The new Jerusalem’s walls and buildings must be clear for the city to radiate the glory of God.
 - iii. Some may be concerned that the city’s translucence will preclude any privacy.
 - iv. There will be nothing in heaven, however, that calls for privacy.
- l. John next turns his attention in the vision to **the foundation stones of the city wall**, which he describes in amazing detail.
- m. They **were adorned with every kind of precious stone**, twelve of which the apostle names.

- i. The names of some of the stones have changed through the centuries, making their identification uncertain.
- n. Eight of these stones were mounted on the high priest's breastpiece (Ex. 28:17–20; 39:10–13).
 - i. **The first foundation stone was jasper** which, as previously noted, is best identified as a diamond;
 - ii. **the second was sapphire**, a brilliant blue stone;
 - iii. **the third was chalcedony**, an agate stone from the Chalcedon region of what is now modern Turkey, sky blue in color with colored stripes;
 - iv. **the fourth was emerald**, a bright green stone;
 - v. **the fifth was sardonyx**, a red and white striped stone;
 - vi. **the sixth was sardius**, a common quartz stone found in various shades of red;
 - vii. **the seventh was chrysolite**, a transparent gold or yellow-hued stone;
 - viii. **the eighth was beryl**, a stone found in various colors, including shades of green, yellow, and blue;
 - ix. **the ninth was topaz**, a yellow-green stone;
 - x. **the tenth was chrysoprase**, a gold-tinted green stone;
 - xi. **the eleventh was jacinth**, a blue or violet-colored stone in John's day, though the modern equivalent is a red or reddish-brown zircon;
 - xii. **The twelfth was amethyst**, a purple stone.
- o. These brightly-colored stones refract the shining brilliance of God's glory into a panoply of beautiful colors.

- i. The scene was one of breathtaking beauty, a spectrum of dazzling colors flashing from the New Jerusalem throughout the re-created universe.
- p. The next facet of the heavenly city that caught John's eye was **the twelve gates, which were twelve pearls.**
 - i. Pearls were highly prized and of great value in John's day.
 - ii. But these **pearls** were like no pearl ever produced by an oyster, because **each one of the gates was a single gigantic pearl** nearly 1,400 miles high.
 - iii. There is a spiritual truth illustrated by the fact that the **gates** were made of **pearls**, as John Phillips explains: 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 receives 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 beloved and put Him to open shame. How like God it is to make the gates of 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. (*Exploring Revelation*, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 254)

IV. Its Internal Character.

- a. 21:21b–22:2
- b. As if just seeing the magnificent capital city of heaven from a distance was not privilege enough, John’s angelic guide took him inside.
- c. As he entered the city, the apostle noted that **the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**
 - i. The streets in the New Jerusalem were made of the highest quality **pure gold** which, like everything else in the heavenly city, was **transparent** like **glass.**
 - ii. Translucent gold is not a material familiar to us on this earth.
 - iii. But everything there is transparent to let the light of God’s glory blaze unrestricted.
- d. Once inside the city, the first thing John noted was that there was **no temple in it.**
 - i. Up to this point, there has been a temple in heaven (cf. 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5–8; 16:1, 17).

- ii. But there will be no need for a temple in the new Jerusalem, **for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.**
 - iii. Their blazing glory will fill the new heaven and the new earth, and there will be no need for anyone to go anywhere to worship God.
 - iv. Life will be worship and worship will be life.
 - v. Believers will be constantly in His presence (cf. 21:3); there will never be a moment when they are not in perfect, holy communion with **the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.**
 - vi. Thus, there will be no need to go to a **temple**, cathedral, church, chapel, or any other house of worship.
 - vii. Believers will be the true worshipers God has always sought (John 4:23).
- e. Returning to the theme of God's brilliant, shining glory, John notes that **the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.**
- i. The new heaven and the new earth will be radically different from the present earth, which is totally dependent on the sun and moon.
 - ii. They provide the cycles of light and darkness, and the moon causes the ocean tides.
 - iii. But in the new heaven and the new earth, they will be unnecessary.
 - 1. There will be no seas (21:1) and hence no tides.
 - 2. Nor will the **sun** and **moon** be needed to provide light, **for the glory of God** will

illumine the New Jerusalem **and its lamp**
will be **the Lamb**.

- f. Once again in Revelation, **God** the Father and the **Lamb**, the Lord Jesus Christ, share authority (cf. 3:21).
- g. **Commenting** on the brilliant light emanating from the New Jerusalem, J. A. Seiss writes: That shining is not from any material combustion,—not from any consumption of fuel that needs to be replaced as one supply burns out; for it is the uncreated light of Him who is light, dispensed by and through the Lamb as the everlasting Lamp, to the home, and hearts, and understandings of his glorified saints. When Paul and Silas lay wounded and bound in the inner dungeon of the prison of Philippi, they still had sacred light which enabled them to beguile the night-watches with happy songs. When Paul was on his way to Damascus, a light brighter than the sun at noon shone round about him, irradiating his whole being with new sights and understanding, and making his soul and body ever afterwards light in the Lord. When Moses came down from the mount of his communion with God, his face was so luminous that his brethren could not endure to look upon it. He was in such close fellowship with light that he became informed with light, and came to the camp as a very lamp of God, glowing with the glory of God. On the Mount of Transfiguration that same light streamed forth from all the body and raiment of the blessed Jesus. And with reference to the very time when this city comes into being and place, Isaiah says, “the moon shall be ashamed and the sun

confounded,”—ashamed because of the out-beaming glory which then shall appear in the new Jerusalem, leaving no more need for them to shine in it, since the glory of God lights it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (*The Apocalypse* [reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1987], 499)

- h. Then John adds another detail to his description of the New Jerusalem.
 - i. Throughout the never-ending **daytime** of the eternal state (**for there will be no night there**) **its gates will never be closed.**
 - ii. In an ancient walled city, the gates were closed at nightfall to keep invaders, marauders, criminals, and other potentially dangerous individuals from entering the city under cover of darkness. That **there will be no night** in eternity, and the **gates** of the New Jerusalem **will never** need to **be closed**, depicts the city’s complete security.
 - iii. It will be a place of rest, safety, and refreshment, where God’s people will “rest from their labors” (14:13).
- i. All in heaven will be perfectly holy.
 - i. Thus, **nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into** the New Jerusalem.
 - ii. The only ones there will be those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.
- j. John’s angelic tour guide next **showed him a river of the water of life.**

- i. With no sea in the eternal state (21:1), there could be no hydrologic cycle, and hence no rain to fill a river.
 - ii. Thus, the **water of life** is not water as we know it; it is a symbol of eternal life (cf. Isa. 12:3; John 4:13–14; 7:38).
 - iii. Like everything else in the New Jerusalem, the **river was clear as crystal** so it could reflect the glory of God.
 - iv. It cascaded down **from the throne of God and of the Lamb** in a dazzling, sparkling, never-ending stream. Its pure, unpolluted, unobstructed flow symbolizes the constant flow of everlasting life from God’s throne to God’s people.
- k. The phrase **in the middle of its street** is best translated “in the middle of its path” and connected with the following phrase **on either side of the river was the tree of life.**
- l. The **tree of life** is the celestial counterpart to the tree of life in Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:22–24), and this tree provides for those who are immortal.
- i. The **tree of life** was a familiar Jewish concept that expressed blessing (cf. 2:7; Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), and the celestial tree symbolizes the blessing of eternal life.
 - ii. That the **tree bears twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month** emphasizes the infinite variety that will fill heaven.
 - iii. The use of the term **month** does not refer to time, since this is the eternal state and time is no more.

It is a human expression of the joyous provision of eternity couched in the familiar terms of time.

- m. Then John makes the intriguing observation that **the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**
 - i. At first glance, that seems confusing, since obviously there will be no illness or injury in heaven that would require **healing**.
 - ii. *Therapeia* (**healing**), however, does not imply illness.
 - iii. Perhaps a better way to translate it would be “life-giving,” “health-giving,” or “therapeutic.”
 - iv. The **leaves of the tree** can be likened to supernatural vitamins, since vitamins are taken not to treat illness, but to promote general health.
 - v. Life in heaven will be fully energized, rich, and exciting.
- n. The text does not say whether the saints will actually eat the **leaves of the tree**, though that is possible.
 - i. Angels ate food with Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:1–8), as did the Lord Jesus Christ with His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:42–43; Acts 10:41).
 - ii. It is conceivable that the saints in heaven will eat, not out of necessity, but for enjoyment.
- V. The Privileges of Its Inhabitants.
 - a. 22:3–5
 - b. As John toured the New Jerusalem, he couldn’t help but notice that life was very different for its inhabitants.

- c. The most dramatic change from the present earth is that **there will no longer be any curse.**
 - i. The removal of the curse will mean the end forever of sorrow, pain, and especially death—the most terrible aspect of the curse (Gen. 2:17).
- d. **God** the Father and the **Lamb**, the Lord Jesus Christ, will reign throughout eternity.
 - i. Since God will continue forever as heaven's sovereign ruler, **His bond-servants will serve Him forever** (cf. 7:15).
 - ii. They will spend all eternity carrying out the infinite variety of tasks that the limitless mind of God can conceive.
 - iii. Incredibly, as the parable in Luke 12:35–40 indicates, the Lord will also serve them.
- e. The saints in the New Jerusalem **will also see God's face** (cf. Matt. 5:8).
 - i. Being perfectly holy and righteous, they will be able to endure the heavenly level of the blazing, glorious light from God's presence without being consumed—something impossible for mortal men (Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12).
- f. The redeemed will also be God's personal possession; **His name will be on their foreheads** (cf. 3:12; 14:1).
 - i. That identification will leave no doubt as to who they belong to forever.
 - ii. John repeats the earlier description of heaven's magnificence: **And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light**

of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them (cf. 21:22–26).

- g. Then he adds a final crescendo describing the saints' heavenly experience: it will never end, because **they will reign forever and ever.**
 - i. That will be the fulfillment of Christ's promise in 3:21: "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." "If we endure," Paul wrote to Timothy, "we will also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12).
- h. The eternal capital city of heaven, the New Jerusalem, will be a place of indescribable, unimaginable beauty.
- i. From the center of it the brilliant glory of God will shine forth through the gold and precious stones to illuminate the new heaven and the new earth. But the most glorious reality of all will be that sinful rebels will be made righteous, enjoy intimate fellowship with God and the Lamb, serve Them, and reign with Them forever in sheer joy and incessant praise.