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Title

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Revelation 21 B

So I want to continue tonight where we left off last week in chapter 21 and though God gives us a little information about what it will be like in heaven, there's still a lot which remains a mystery. And because God is the architect and the builder, He has chosen to keep most of it a secret. And of course He did that on purpose. Why?

Well we don't know for sure, but I think He probably wants it to be a surprise. I think He wants us to be in awe when we get there and so we're just going to have to wait and see. And though I hope we don't have to paint or cut grass or do maintenance of any kind, I don't know that for sure. I do know if we do, we'll enjoy it and we won't cry about having to do it.

Now, last time in the first half of chapter 21 we learned who would be in heaven. We learned that believers would occupy this new heaven and earth. Those who have been redeemed throughout the ages.

And if 100 billion people have really lived like is estimated since the beginning of time, then depending on the percentage who were believers, there are going to be a lot of people in heaven.

Even if only 25%, or one in four people were saved, then that's 25 billion people who will be in heaven. There are only 8 billion in all of the world today.

At any rate only believers, only followers of Christ, will be there.

And then we learned who wouldn't be there. All those who rejected the gospel and rejected Christ and loved their sin and this world more than Jesus; those people won't be in heaven. They'll spend their eternity in hell.

Now, one of the questions we have is; Will we remember our family and friends who didn't make it? And I believe the answer is no. There won't be any sorrow or pain or any sense of separation when we get to heaven according to God's word; and so I don't believe we'll remember those who rejected Christ and didn't make it.

But I believe they'll remember us. In fact, I believe they'll remember every time they ever heard the gospel and rejected it, but that's of course another sermon for another time.

Tonight we want to focus on heaven.

So John writes in verse 9 that an angel comes to him and says,
9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

And with that, John begins to describe our future home. This is the same place Jesus mentioned in John 14, when He said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions or dwelling places.” The Father’s house and the new Jerusalem are one and the same. And so this where God will reside and this is where God’s people will reside for eternity.

Now, back in the first few verses of chapter 21, remember we saw in verse 2 the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. And it says in verse 3, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men.”

Well, that’s the city where we’re going to live. And that’s the city where God dwells. Over in verse 22, it says that there’s no temple in this city, and that’s because the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple. And so this is God’s house. This is where God dwells, and this will also be our house and where we will live for eternity with Him.

And so here in Revelation chapter 21, we have a description or at least a partial description of the new heaven and the new earth.

Now, keep in mind that this city, this New Jerusalem is the capital city of heaven and will be the capital city of the new heavens and the new earth in its final state.

And over and over in the New Testament we're told that as believers we are citizens of heaven. Even now, this is not our home. Our home is in heaven and our citizenship is in heaven and also our inheritance and our loved ones and our friends if they were saved. And so this is where our treasure is, but best of all, this is where Jesus our Savior is.

So look at verse 10.

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. 12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

Now, really we could just read what the word of God says here in chapter 21 and get most everything the Bible has to say about

heaven out of it. It doesn't really need a lot of commentary or explanation. It's pretty straightforward and easy to understand just like it's written. But even so we're going to go through it together.

Now, what John notices first about this great city is the light. There's a light that permeates this city and it isn't the sun. And it's not from spot lights or light bulbs. It's from God.

In fact, John calls this light the "glory of God".

This is the brilliant light of God's presence. It's the same glory that filled the tabernacle; and then later Solomon's temple; and the same glory that lit up the sky above Bethlehem when Jesus was born and it's the glory of God that the angels sang about that night.

And so this light that John sees here is the glory of God and it's being manifest throughout heaven as it reflects off the streets of pure gold and through this massive structure built of pure jasper. And when John sees it, it looks like one gigantic diamond coming down out of the sky. Not a blemish anywhere, but a completely clear diamond without flaw.

And then add to that the color of all the precious stones that God has constructed the walls and the foundation and what John saw he didn't have the words to properly describe.

And then as best he can, the Apostle John gives us some basic details on the exterior of the Father's house.

He said it had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, three on each of the four sides. And at the gates were twelve angels, and on the gates were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

And so, there really are gates which lead into heaven, but contrary to all the jokes about heaven, Saint Peter's not standing at any of them. In fact, God has assigned only angels to serve as greeters into heaven. And they're not there to keep people out and they're not there to guard the city of heaven; they're there to welcome people in.

And then John tells us that on each one of these twelve gates is inscribed the name of one of Israel's twelve tribes. And this is just a reminder that God isn't through with Israel and Israel throughout eternity will play a central role in the kingdom of God.

And then verse 14 tells us, "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

Now, we know for a fact that Judas's name won't be there. And we know who the eleven will be, but who will be number twelve?

Well, that's one of those things the Bible does tell us. It could be Matthias, the one who was selected to fill Judas's position, or it could be the apostle Paul. But again, we're not told for sure and so that's just one of the many answers we're going to have to wait for.

So why do you think God used these two groups—the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles of the church?

Well, like we've learned before, the church did not replace Israel in God's plan. The church was in addition to Israel. And God in His sovereignty has a very distinctive purpose for both Israel and the church.

And so with the names of both of these groups built into the construction of heaven, we're going to be reminded of God's grace in every dispensation of time, whether it was through the nation of Israel or God's grace to and through the church.

And then in verse 15, we have a description of the city's size.

15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

So John watches as this angel measures the width, and the length, and the height of the city.

He uses "a gold measuring rod," or a golden reed. A reed back then was the standard for measuring something and a reed was about ten-feet long. Only this wasn't just any reed, this was a golden reed or a golden rod, because this was God's measuring

tool that the angel used. Why? Because he was measuring God's property.

Now, he's going to measure the city, and then he's going to measure the gates and then he's going to measure the wall.

Verse 16 says, **16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs.** (Your Bible may say stadia. Either is the same.) **Its length, breadth, and height are equal.**

So he measures the city with this rod and he comes up with fifteen hundred miles. He says, its length and width and height are equal." So it's fifteen hundred miles in all directions.

Some teach that this 1500 miles is the cubed number which would make the city between 11 & 12 miles in each direction. Others say it could possibly be a pyramid. And I guess that's possible, but it makes more sense that it's 1500 miles in each direction and is a perfect cube.

And one reason is because when God gave orders for the building of the holy place in the tabernacle in the temple, it was a cube.

Not only that but most times pyramids, whether in Egypt, or Mexico, or anywhere else are almost always associated with

paganism. The first such structure in fact was the Tower of Babel; and so most likely it will be a cube versus a pyramid.

And there are other reasons that I won't take the time to mention for time's sake.

Now, you might wonder is this going to be enough space for everybody?

Well, again if we go with the 25% having been saved in the course of history, then we're talking around 25 billion or so people living there.

Now, if you also assume that twenty-five percent of the city will be used for the dwelling places of its' inhabitants and the rest allocated to streets, and parks, and public buildings, et cetera."

Then that's still going to leave thirty or forty cubic miles for each person to live in. That's somewhere around 80-100 acres. And so yes, there will be plenty of room for everyone to live in this city, not to mention we'll have the entire earth to boot.

And then in verse 17 it says, **"17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.**

One hundred and forty four cubits is seventy-two yards or 216 feet." And it only makes sense that this is the thickness and not the height. It wouldn't make sense to have a wall that's only 216 feet high around a city that's 1500 miles high.

So what was the wall made out of?

Well, look at verse 18: **18 The construction of its wall was of jasper (jasper is like a diamond); and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.**

So the walls are of jasper which are clear like glass and the streets of the city and the construction of the city was like the purest finest gold, which is also clear like glass. And when John witnessed this city coming down to earth it was as if he was watching a huge diamond descend!

Now, why you might ask does it have to be clear?

We'll, because this city has but one purpose and that is to radiate the glory of God. In other words, you can't have anything blocking or hindering God's light. Everything is transparent. There's nothing hidden. No need for privacy because nothing will be done in private.

And then in verse 19, John tells us about the foundation.

He says, 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

Now, eight of these twelve stones were found in the breastplate of the high priest. If you go back to Exodus 28 and Exodus 39, you'll find eight of these stones listed there.

The first one again is jasper and jasper is a crystal-clear diamond that reflects like none other. And then the second was sapphire, which is a brilliant blue. The third was chalcedony and best we can tell is a sky blue with translucent stripes of color. And then the fourth was an emerald, which is, a blazing bright green. The fifth was sardonyx, which is a red and white stone. The sixth was sardius, a rather common red stone that was from the quartz family.

And then the seventh was chrysolite; which is sort of lucid gold or yellow stone. And then it says the eighth, beryl; that's a sea green. The ninth, topaz; a transparent yellow and green. The tenth, chrysoprase; that's another shade of green. The eleventh, jacinth, which was a brilliant violet color. And the twelfth, amethyst, which is purple.

And what you have when you put all that together is this brilliant combination of colors that the light of God's glory is shining through. And all these beautiful colors make up the foundation of this heavenly city.

And so John sees this bright and shining city that looks like a gigantic diamond coming down from heaven and then the light of

God's glory shining through all these colored jewels, and even in our wildest dreams we can't see what John saw. But one day we will. And not only will we see it but we'll also live there. That'll be our home forever and ever.

And then lastly John describes the gates; and this really is impossible to imagine. Look at verse 21.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

So the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Twelve pearls that could possibly be as tall as the city.

Each gate was a single pearl.

Now, why would God use a pearl? A pearl is not a precious stone or metal. A pearl is a gem formed within an oyster. Now, that's a huge oyster is it not?

And it's formed when the oyster receives an irritation or a wound, and around whatever caused the irritation or wound, the oyster builds a pearl.

And so the pearl, we might say, is the oyster's answer to whatever injured it. And in the same way, heaven is God's answer to those who wounded and crucified Christ. And every time we go through one of those gates we're going to be reminded of why we're there. And what Jesus had to through in order for us to be

there. The pain and the suffering that Jesus experienced was greater than anything we could ever imagine. And so too will be the pearly gates that stand as reminder.

Well, so much for the outside and the general appearance. If you come back next week, Lord willing we're going go inside.

Amen