**PEARLY GATES AND STREETS OF GOLD**

**CHAPTER 21 – PART 2**

*[Making the case for a physical eternal kingdom – not just spiritual, but a physical reality]*

This morning we will be in the last part of Rev Ch 21 focusing our attention on the glorious details of the eternal dwelling place of the saints. We will begin with the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, but we will not end there.

*[Draw your attention back to v 4 and make a distinction between the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20) and the Eternal Kingdom (Rev 21-22)]*

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.

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

19 The 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.

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.

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.

The holy city is a beautiful self-contained paradise that God created especially for the bride of Christ. You could say that it will have everything, but that is not true. Let me mention 3 things that heaven will NOT contain:

1. Sin. Satan and all the forces and influences of evil have been cast into the lake of fire. Unlike with original creation, Satan is not free to prowl around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He cannot tempt anyone anymore. May I remind you of what verse 4 said. READ Rev 21:4.
2. A temple, a place of worship. Now why is this? Because as we see in verse 22 God is worshipped everywhere.
3. A lighting system. No sun nor moon or stars. The glory, the brilliance of God Himself mentioned in verses 23-25 lights heaven up. As a result, it is always daytime and never night inside.

Now let’s talk about the shape of the holy city. There are two geometric possibilities that would fit the description of this passage – a cube or a pyramid. From verse 16 the length, width and height are about the same, all about 1,500 miles. Mark Hitchcock in his book “The End” says “the footprint of the city would be about the same as drawing a square from Miami up to Maine then westward to Minneapolis then south to Houston and then back to Miami. And that’s just the ground level. The towering city rises 1,500 miles.” Mr. Hitchcock says the city is a colossal cube containing 3.4 billion cubic feet of space. I think he’s right. The shape of the holy city will follow the model that God gave Israel for the holy of holies in the temple and in the tabernacle – and that was a cube (show a picture).

In the description, v 10, “coming down out of heaven,” the holy city appears to hang suspended above the new earth and slowly descending. Perhaps the physical laws of the universe as we know them have been repealed meaning that there is no gravity. Perhaps there is a supernatural force at work here. Presumably (though we are not told this) it comes to rest on the new earth.

We have already been told that the new earth will no longer have oceans, but it apparently has mountains because that is John’s vantage point for this particular vision. In v 10 he’s standing on a high mountain on the new earth.

Notice the description of what’s inside the holy city. It is quite a beautiful place!

The foundation contains 12 layers of precious stones (costly gems) extending around the entire perimeter of the city 6,000 total miles in length (4 x 1,500 miles). The walls of the holy city, v 17, are made of jasper and are 144 cubits thick (almost 220 feet thick). So the foundation is at least as wide as or wider than that. From bottom to top the layers mentioned in verses 17 to 20 consist of –

Jasper – like clear glass in substance but with a gold cast to it

Sapphire – similar to a diamond in hardness and blue in color

Agate (chalcedony) – sky blue with other colors running through it

Emerald – a bright green color

Onyx (sardius) – a bright red color, though it is also found in a honey color

Carnelian – a brownish-red mineral, polished to an orange red color

Chrysolyte – transparent stone golden in color

Beryl – a sea green color

Topaz – a yellowish-green color and transparent

Chrysoprase – apple green color

Jacinth – violet or blue color

Amethyst – a purple color

The glory of God is reflected in a spectrum of brilliant color. On each of the foundation layers is written one of the names of the twelve apostles. I believe this will be the eleven faithful disciples (minus Judas) plus the Apostle Paul whom Jesus called personally on the Damascus Road.

The various elements that make up the infrastructure of the holy city discussed in verses 18 and 21 (buildings, bridges, streets and sidewalks) are made of a material described as “pure gold, like clear glass.” Does this mean it is transparent gold? Certainly sounds like it. If so, then it has to be some kind of a new element because gold as we know it today is not transparent, or even translucent. I like the way Mark Hitchcock put it in his book: “People often talk about the streets of gold in heaven, but actually there is only one street of gold. Everyone will live on Main Street. And that street will be paved with gold polished to mirror brilliance. Gold is so plentiful to the Creator that He uses it to pave His street.”

Finally, let’s talk about the gates. According to verses 12 and 13 there are twelve gates, three on each side of the holy city, each made from a single pearl (now that is a big oyster!). This is where we get the age-old expression of entering heaven through the “pearly gates.” Please notice that angels are stationed at each gate and NOT Saint Peter. Each gate has a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel on it.

OK. Now for the million dollar question… WHY ARE THERE GATES? This holy city, this new Jerusalem is a place of perfect peace. All the saints living in their glorified resurrection bodies will have everything they need. The very presence of God dwells inside, which is really the greatest thing of all. So, why gates? Why would there ever be a need to leave? To further complicate matters verse 25 tells us that these gates will never close.

So I gave this a lot of thought and read several commentaries and books about it. I especially found Randy Alcorn’s description in his book “Heaven” helpful. “As I read Rev 21 and 22 I’m struck with [how Ch 22] reflects the Edenic elements of the New Jerusalem – rivers, trees, fruit, and mountains while [Ch 21]’s view of beauty reflects the vast detailed architecture and precious stones of heaven’s capital. Which kind of beauty is better? We needn’t choose between them. The New Earth will be filled with both. Whatever God’s people create is also God’s creation, for it is He who shapes and gifts and empowers us to create.”

Then he adds how we will be able to come and go from the New Jerusalem to travel around and pursue adventures and enjoy a whole host of activities elsewhere on the New Earth. He says this: “Wherever we go and whatever we do, we’ll never leave the presence of the King. For although He dwells especially in the New Jerusalem, He will yet be fully present in the far reaches of the new universe – in which every subatomic particle will shout His glory.”

[comparison between Jerusalem and the earth today with the New Jerusalem and the New Earth of Ch 21-22 – NO COMPARISON!]

I will close by telling you this – when this point in history comes, whether that’s 1000, 2000, or 10,000 years from now, I KNOW IT IS WHERE I WANT TO BE. There is only one way we can assure our place there and that is (v 27) to have our name written in the Lamb’s book of life. To know Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

Jesus said, “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” (Matthew 7:14) The road to heaven is not an eight-lane interstate heading any number of directions. Rather, it is a narrow footpath and it leads through the person of Jesus Christ. If you know of someone you love that is not on this road, tell them about it. Introduce them to Jesus. Get them on the right path. After all, time is slipping away and eternity is nearer than we think!