

God's Master Plan In Prophecy

Lesson 16 – The New Jerusalem & Beyond

Key Scriptures: Revelation 21:9-22:21; John 14:2-3

Introduction

After John saw the new heaven and new earth, his final vision was that of a holy city named "New Jerusalem." Most of what we know about the future after the White Throne Judgment is recorded in these last two chapters of the book of Revelation. We have already studied what the "old heaven" looked like in the 4th and 5th chapters of Revelation. Our description of the new heaven and the new earth is extremely vague and instead God chose to describe the golden city of New Jerusalem in detail. When most people think of "heaven" they are actually thinking of New Jerusalem and these passages of scripture.

Rev 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

One of the same angels which poured out the Wrath of God also showed John the city of New Jerusalem. Here the city is also referred to as "the bride, the wife of the Lamb." Because of this verse some people have taught wrongly that the New Jerusalem is not a literal place but just symbolic of the church. It *is* symbolic of the church, but it is *also* a literal place upon the New Earth, and the law of double fulfillment of prophecy is at work here. As we will see, the city is designed so that you can learn tremendous lessons about the Apostolic Church from studying its configuration, but just because there is a spiritual lesson to be learned from these passages does not negate the literal meaning.

Why did the same angel who helped announce God's Wrath also escort John on a tour of this fabulous city? Because during the Wrath of God the "Great Harlot," who representing the false church, was judged. The false church was described as a loose woman *and* as a city: Babylon. During the Wrath of God, the false church will be destroyed along with the actual city that houses its headquarters. In contrast, the church will be saved from destruction and the church is represented by a virtuous woman, the bride of Christ. It is also described as a city: New Jerusalem. The association teaches us that it will be the church that lives forever in this fabulous city! Jesus promised before He ascended:

John 14:2-3 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

This is a very often quoted scripture and this translation is much more faithful to the original Greek than the mental picture grasped from the King James Version word, "mansions." When we studied the old heaven, there were no such structures described around the throne. It is very probable, then, that Jesus spoke of New Jerusalem when He told His followers, "I go to prepare a place for you." This scripture makes it fairly obvious that a literal city is intended here and not just a spiritual representation of the church.

The New Jerusalem

Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Again we are given a reference to the mountain of God again. At points throughout this Bible study it is interesting to note the difference between the false church symbolized by the great harlot and Babylon, and the true church, the pure bride symbolized by the New Jerusalem. The golden city will sit upon one great and high mountain, whereas the false church sat upon many hills. The true church worships one God and the false church has many deities.

Also notice that the great city, descends "out of heaven" and to the New Earth. The city will actually be located upon the New Earth and not in heaven at all!

Rev 21:11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

Written by R. Jeremiah Sibley, all rights reserved.

This is the 3rd revision of what was previously known as the "Dispensation Prophecy Bible Study."

Copies of this study may be freely distributed for not-for-profit use only.

Unless otherwise noted, scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE © Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Prophecy #16 – The New Jerusalem & Beyond

The city seemed to shine with a great light. The color of normal jasper is sea-green, and the best and purest is almost crystal clear. What John is saying is that the city shone with a vivid crystal green glow emanating around it.

Rev 21:12-13 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. 13 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.

The city had a wall all around it and twelve gates manned by twelve angels. The city is square and has three gates per side and each is labeled by one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The four sides of the city correspond to the four directions of the earth: east, north, south, and west.¹

Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The city has twelve foundations and in them written the names of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. This is representative of the true church being founded upon the Apostle's doctrine. If we are to be the true church of God, then we must preach, teach, and live like the original Apostles in the Book of Acts!

Much supposition has been undertaken about the identity of the twelfth apostle. Remember that Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and hanged himself, effectively removing himself from the foundation of the church. In the first chapter of Acts, a substitute named Matthias was chosen to replace him. Some say that the twelfth apostle upon which the church was founded was the Apostle Paul. In deed, Paul did refer to himself as an apostle "born out of due time."¹ Paul certainly had a much broader impact at laying the foundation of the Apostolic Church than Matthias did. Matthias is never mentioned in scripture after the 1st chapter of Acts. Paul is the subject of Acts from the 9th chapter until the end. Paul also wrote two-thirds of the New Testament and effectively evangelized the world of his time unlike any other missionary or apostle. It would not come as a surprise to me if Paul's name was included as the twelfth apostle, but we will not know for sure until we arrive at the New Jerusalem for ourselves.

Rev 21:15-16 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. 16 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; its length and width and height are equal.

The angel measured the city for John which is further proof that he is describing a literal city. The city is a perfect cube in dimensions and its size is immense: the city is 1,500 miles wide, by 1,500 miles long, by 1,500 miles high! A rough equivalent of this distance in modern day North America would be for the top boundary of the city to be from Los Angeles to Chicago, and the western boundary to be from Los Angeles to Mexico City: this is a big city!

Rev 21:17-18 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. 18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

The angel was calling out the measurements of the city to John in units with which he was familiar. The Greek reads, "144 cubits" which figures to a modern-day equivalent of about 216 feet. It is not clear as to whether the wall is 216 feet high or 216 feet wide. Either way, this is a large wall but not one that hides the city from view. The wall is made of jasper: a sea-green colored rock that is extremely hard. Jasper comes in two colors so it is very possible that the other "reddish-brown color" is meant. The city is made from "pure gold" which is "like clear glass." Gold is refined by continually melting the metal down to a liquid state and then skimming off the impurities from the top. Gold is ranked according to it's state of purity. Man cannot produce "pure gold" but scientists say that if we were able to, that the gold would be clear and able to be looked through. What man has not been able to do, God can do and will build the entire beautiful city out of the purest gold!

The refining of gold is symbolic of the purification of the church through fiery trials and persecution. God allows trials to come to "melt us down" and remove the impurities. Only if we allow God to continue working in our lives will we ever have the hope of becoming "pure gold." There are too many scriptures that use gold as an analogy of the church being purified to list here. One good one is found in the book of Job when Job was in the midst of a tremendous trial and yet said that he would trust God:

¹ See 1 Corinthians 15:8-9.

Prophecy #16 – The New Jerusalem & Beyond

Job 23:10 "But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Remember when you are going through a trial and seemed to be emotionally "melted" that God is purifying you and wanting to remove some of the things that are not like Him from your life – be like Job and come forth as gold!

Rev 21:19-20 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone 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; the twelfth, amethyst.

Here is a list of the foundations of the city and a description of each literal gem:

1. Jasper – either sea-green or a bright reddish brown.
2. Sapphire – a vivid blue.
3. Chalcedony – there are several colors, but the finest is of a yellow-red mix.
4. Emerald – a bright green color.
5. Sardonyx – A bluish white stone with a red fringe.
6. Sardius – a deep "blood red" color.
7. Chrysolite – a gold hued gem.
8. Beryl – a bluish green color. Today we would call this color teal.
9. Topaz – a pale green with a hint of yellow.
10. Chrysoprase – this is like Chrysolite with a bluish tint. A metallic blue-gold.
11. Jacinth – red with a mix of yellow.
12. Amethyst – a deep purple.

Because we know that these twelve foundations represent the twelve apostles, there has to be matching symbolism between the disciples of Jesus Christ and the characteristics of the gems. Perhaps one day, a Bible scholar with a better understanding of the nature of these precious stones can explain the significance. These twelve stones are almost an exact match to the twelve stones in the High Priest's breastplate which corresponded with the twelve tribes of Israel and is a worthy subject of a complete Bible Study in itself.

Just for fun, I will suppose as to the meaning of a few of the stones chosen here. In the lists of the Apostles, Peter is always mentioned first, so perhaps jasper is to refer to him.² If we suppose the reddish-brown shade of jasper is meant, then we can see a correlation between its characteristics and Simon Peter. The stone is extremely hard and is only pretty when highly polished and that is a fair assessment of Peter's life! The 12th stone of purple could refer to either Matthias or Paul as we have discussed. Purple was the color of kings and Jesus Christ wore a robe of purple on the day of His crucifixion. Judas Iscariot, the previous 12th disciple, betrayed Jesus and as a result of the events surrounding the death of the King of Kings, either Matthias and Paul were able to enter into the twelve. As to the identity and possible correlation of the rest, I have no idea. One day we will be able to ask Jesus Himself!

Rev 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Each of the twelve gates were made of a solid pearl – my father-in-law, who loves oysters, likes to say that God has reserved the oysters for him to fry and eat! The streets are paved with the same pure gold of which the city was created.

Rev 21:22-23 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And 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.

There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem as God will fill the city with His presence! Remember that the Greek word translated and here is *kai* which can also mean "even." As we have seen from the rest of the book of Revelation, the Lamb *is* the Lord God Almighty. There is also no sun or moon because the glory of God lightens it. The Lamb must be God Himself because the verse says the Lamb lightens the city and God will not share His glory with another.³ It is clear that the New Earth will be quite different from our present universe.

² The lists of the Apostles are Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13.

³ See Isaiah 48:11.

Prophecy #16 – The New Jerusalem & Beyond

Rev 21:24-26 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. **25** In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; **26** and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

Those who have inherited eternal life will live forever in the light of this city. The glory of God which will emanate from the New Jerusalem will light the entire earth, and the gates will never need to be shut because there will be no night there and only "glory and honor" or praise and worship will be heard throughout the city for forever!

Rev 21:27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Knowing that the church would be reading about this great city before they actually could see it, God inputs a reminder that to inherit eternal life and to be able to enter into this great city, we must put away all sins, abominations – meaning things that God particularly hates – and lies. We must also make sure that our name is written in the "book of life."

Rev 22:1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

John saw in the midst of the city, the throne of God and a "river of the water of life" flowed from out of the throne. The "living water" is symbolic of the Holy Spirit in the church.⁴ It will also be a literal river within the literal city of New Jerusalem. Remember that the Greek word *kai* which is translated here as "and" can also mean "even." The last line should read "God even of the Lamb." The river is symbolic of how that the Spirit of God will flow freely among the redeemed.

Rev 22:2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

This river flowed throughout the city and on its banks were the "tree of life." In the Greek, this is plural which means that there will be many "trees of life." The tree of life was found in the Garden of Eden and was the tree that caused Adam and Eve to be able to live forever. When they ate of the forbidden tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they were banished from the garden and thus forbidden access to the fruit of the tree of life and therefore eventually physically died. The Flood of Noah's time destroyed the paradise of Eden and the "tree of life" disappears from the scriptures until the final chapter of the Bible here in the book of Revelation. In the New Jerusalem, there will be many "trees of life" bearing fruit every month indicating that there will be no death in this great city! "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" can only be guessed at as to its meaning. Some scholars believe that there will be a difference in the glorified bodies from those who went in the first resurrection – the Rapture of the Church – and those who were saved after the Millennial Reign and that the leaves of the trees provide the health for those people who were not a part of the original church. That is all supposition and the phrase probably represents that there will be no sickness in the New Jerusalem.

Rev 22:3-5 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; **4** they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. **5** 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; and they will reign forever and ever.

The curse of sin, which is death, will be removed. We will forever serve Jesus Christ in this glorious place. There is only one throne and one who sits upon the throne, Jesus Christ. He is the "image of the invisible God"⁵ so therefore when we see "the face of God" we will be looking at the face of none other but Jesus Christ. "His name will be on their foreheads" means that we will forever be loyal to Him. Night will be unheard of and we will forever rule and reign with Jesus Christ!

Rev 22:6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

John is reassured that everything that he has seen, no matter how crazy or fantastic the visions may seem, are from God and will be fulfilled. God revealed them to him so the church would be able to know the things which "must soon take place." God wants us to study and understand prophecy!

⁴ See John 4:13-15; 7:37-39.

⁵ See Colossians 1:15.

Prophecy #16 – The New Jerusalem & Beyond

Rev 22:7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

Some scoffers point out that it has been almost 2,000 years since Jesus said "I am coming quickly" but to God two millennia is but a small fraction of time. There can be no doubt that we are living in the last time period before the culmination of all the prophecies found in the book of Revelation. We should view this verse as "we are the closest that we have ever been to the coming of Jesus Christ!" We must serve Him with everything that we have! If we will heed the warnings of this book and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we will be blessed by living forever with Him in this glorious place!

Rev 22:8-10 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." 10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

When John saw that the visions that God had revealed to him were coming to a close, he knelt down and tried to worship the angel which had been speaking. The angel quickly corrected him by saying "worship God." Then the angel said "do not seal" the prophecies of this book for the "time is near." In other words, "do not try to say that these prophecies are for later, because they will immediately begin to be fulfilled." And so they did. Shortly after the death of John, the Roman empire fell and the Holy Roman empire rose the first time, creating a false church and ushering in a modern age that has followed the script of the book of Revelation perfectly. Some of the Early Church fathers after the Apostles wanted to get rid of the book of Revelation because they did not understand it, but now we can clearly see how that God has always held the future in His hands.

Rev 22:11-12 "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." 12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

Jesus again speaks directly to John about the time of His coming. When Jesus comes, those who are lost will be lost and those who are saved will be saved. It will be a cutoff "deadline" upon the earth. When Jesus returns and all of these prophecies are fulfilled, the opportunity of finding repentance and making things right with a Holy God will be over. We must take advantage of the time of mercy and grace within which we are currently living!

Rev 22:13-14 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

The book and fittingly, the Bible, ends with a direct address of Jesus Christ. He is "Alpha and Omega" – in other words, everything from A to Z and everything that we could possibly need. When we obey His commandments, we earn the right to the tree of life and the ability to enter into the New Jerusalem to forever be with the Lord.

Rev 22:15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

No unrighteousness will be able to enter into the New Jerusalem. If you want to live there, then you must be "born again" into the kingdom of God. The term "dogs" here was a derogatory term used for humans and does not literally mean the fuzzy kind with wet noses. In the Old Testament, "dogs" were homosexuals.⁶ In the New Testament, the term referred to those who refused to serve Jesus Christ in the Apostolic church because they were bound by traditions of men.⁷ Contrary to what Disney thinks, all dogs do not go to heaven!

Rev 22:16-17 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

⁶ See Deuteronomy 23:18.

⁷ See Philippians 3:2.

Prophecy #16 – The New Jerusalem & Beyond

Jesus commanded John to teach these things in the early Apostolic Church which means that we should also study them. Jesus then commands all who hear the message of God in these writings to drink from the "water of life without cost." In other words, receive the Holy Spirit and never stop allowing it to impact your life.

Rev 22:18-19 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

A special curse is placed upon those who would add to or take away from this book. This specifically refers to the book of Revelation, but the principle applies to all of scripture and is a fitting end to the Bible. If we will follow the written Word of God, then we will inherit eternal life: we cannot add anything to His requirements nor can we ignore anything and we must live what He has written.

Rev 22:20-21 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

John shows us the correct response to prophecy: all of this knowledge should cause us to look forward to Christ's return. A Christian should not fear the future events nor the return of Jesus Christ but should actually be excited as the day approaches. "Amen" means "let it be so."

What Happens Next?

In comparison to the other periods of man's history, we really do not have much information of what we will be doing for all of eternity. The only theory that I can bring forth is based upon several interesting scriptures. They are:

Pss 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

That is, when we long for something good and holy, God will fulfill that desire.

1 Peter 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.

"The angels long to look into" our salvation experience with the infilling of the Holy Ghost. They desire to experience the love of God that He has revealed to humanity. Remember that the devil is simply a fallen angel, yet God did not make any effort to provide him with an opportunity at reconciliation or a plan of salvation. Yet, when Adam sinned, God undertook a grand plan that included coming in flesh Himself to purchase redemption for His prized creation. The angels have seen but not personally experienced that kind of unselfish, Godly love. They desire to experience it, and it is a principle in God's Word that He will satisfy the longing for good things. Now notice this scripture:

1 Cor 6:3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

Paul makes mention that one day the church will "judge angels!" We have studied all of prophecy and nowhere have we found a time when the church commanded and judged angels. Could it be that after time as we know it ends, the angels through some sort of grand plan of God have an opportunity to experience the Holy Ghost and the love of God that has been revealed to humanity? And could it be that God uses us as the ones to show His love to them, minister to them, and to ultimately judge them? Perhaps that is what we will be doing for eternity while we are praising Him for saving us and enjoying our new, splendid city!

Whatever we will be doing, we will live forever and will forever be with Him. There will be no tears or crying or hurts or pain. God will be "all in all" and everything that we need. The suffering of sin and of this world will be but a distant memory. And God has promised us all of this, if we will live for Him in this short life that we are given upon the earth. Surrender everything to Him and trust Him completely!

Endnotes

Notice that the direction "east" is mentioned first. Jesus will return in the "eastern sky." It was the eastern gate of the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve were cast out of after their sin. Joshua and the children of Israel camped on the east side of the city of Jericho and there placed 12 stones to represent the tribes of Israel. When Jesus Christ was born, the wise men saw His star "in the east." God certainly seems to have an affinity for the east. The sun rises in the east and so it represents a "new day" in scripture.