



## A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

### Week 82: The Eternal State, Part 2

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#### Review:

- A. We are winding down our study series: "A Biblical View of the End Times." We have one week left after today.
- B. Last week we began to explore the end portions of the book of **Revelation**. **Specifically, we studied Ch. 21** which looks far ahead into that time known as 'The Eternal State.'
- C. Of all the ways we have looked ahead in this study, and as the prophetic Scriptures have permitted us to do so, looking ahead into The Eternal State is a completely different exercise. This future set of conditions will NEVER end!
- D. The magnitude of this truth is so overwhelming that it is impossible to adequately describe. We can only try to wrap our minds around what God has chosen to tell us, and let our faith do the rest.
- E. Last week, we marched through **the first 8 verses of Ch. 21**. We learned several things about this most blessed future time that awaits all who have fully placed their faith in Jesus Christ.
  1. First, we learned that this present heaven and earth (including the rehabilitated environment that will define The Millennial Kingdom) will pass away.
  2. A completely new heaven and earth are coming, and it is very different than the heavens and earth we know now.
  3. One thing we are told is there is "no more sea." We looked at several possible reasons for this.
  4. Second, we learned that we will live WITH God. We will see Him, we will know Him, and we will be comforted by Him.
  5. Third, the old order of things will pass away, and as part of that, there will be no more tears, no more death, no more mourning, and no more pain. We can assume from this text and others related to it, that we will not remember anything from the past which causes us any discomfort.
  6. It is my belief that prior to this point, there is some form of recall and comprehension of those former chapters of human history in which sin held some sway.
  7. It's the same reason the souls under the altar in heaven are crying out to God for vengeance and justice. It's why we will co-judge with Jesus Christ in The Millennial Kingdom and be dispensing justice in the face of sin.
  8. It's not until this eternal state, that sin and the final enemy of death is fully vanquished. **Verse 4 of Ch. 21** identifies this future time as being the moment that *"the old order of things has passed away."*
  9. It's not until this point that God declares that He will *"make everything new."*
  10. We wrapped up last week's lesson by looking at those who are defined as *"overcomers,"* and we looked at the list of those who will not receive the blessings

of this eternal state. This list is given in **vs. 8**, and we took a few moments to unpack its qualifications a bit more.

**NOTE:** Today, I want to move rapidly through the rest of **Ch. 21 and the first part of Ch. 22**. We have a few more things to understand about this “Eternal State,” and we’ll do what we did last week: we’ll stick to the text and march through it.

## I. The New Jerusalem is described: (**Ch. 21:9-27**)

### A. It’s physical description:

1. John is shown the New Jerusalem by one of the 7 angels who delivered the Seven Bowl Judgements. (interesting comment delivers greatest judgment / shows greatest blessing).
  - a. This angel carries John away in a vision to a great mountain, and it’s here that John sees and describes The Holy City, also known as “The New Jerusalem.”
  - b. John describes it as “*descending*,” and he is simply giving more detail to the descent he saw in **vs. 1**. The Holy City does not descend twice.
2. John then proceeds to give more details about this city’s description:
  - a. First, it is a shining city, that is to say it gives off a great light. This is the *Shekinah* glory of God manifesting this way.
  - b. The city needs no secondary source of illumination, because it is lit by the visible manifestation of God’s presence.
  - c. The city is described as being “*like jasper, as clear as crystal*.” It’s clearly not the precious stone, jasper, that we know, but something else, perhaps diamond. It is pure, clear, and fully shining.
  - d. Second, it has walls. This is a clear description of a city feature we are not familiar with in our times, but it was very standard of the Biblical era. Cities had walls, and this one does as well. It’s part of its architecture.
  - e. This wall is great and high. It has 12 gates, 3 on each side, at which are stationed 12 angels, one angel at each gate.
  - f. Each of these gates is named, each one with one of the 12 tribes of Israel. As I mentioned last week, some Jewish heritage or reminders continues into the eternal order.
  - g. Dropping down to **vs. 21**, we see that each of these 12 gates is made from a single pearl. So each gate is a dazzling, opulent, shimmering construction.
  - h. We are then reminded of the earliest formations of the church, because there are 12 foundations of this wall that surrounds the city. In **vs. 14** we see that each of these 12 layers or foundations have written on it the names of the 12 apostles.

**NOTE:** A natural question arises here, “What are the 12 names?” Eleven of the original 12 seem clear enough, but who will be listed as the twelfth? Options:

3. Will it be Judas, or Matthias, chosen by the remaining 11 to replace Judas? Or will it be Paul? There are arguments for / against each of these options.
4. Judas might stay even as Jesus Christ's crucifixion scars will also remain (**Cf. John 20:27**). Perhaps this would be a reminder or a memorial of Christ's atoning work on the cross. This is the suggestion of some commentators.
5. Matthias, replacing Jude, might also be a candidate. However, Matthias' role seems relatively background when compared to the impact of the original 11.
6. Personally, (and this is what most commentators conclude) I am inclined to think the twelfth name will be that of the Apostle Paul. He was a very major contributor to the early church and to the New Testament.
  - a. What is an apostle? This is an important question as there are many people today falsely claiming they are apostles.
  - b. The Biblical qualifications of an apostle were: (1) to have been a witness of the resurrected Christ (**Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1**), (2) to have been explicitly chosen by the Holy Spirit (**Cf. Acts 9:15**), and (3) to have the ability to perform signs and wonders (**Cf. Acts 2:43; 2 Corinthians 12:12**).
  - c. Because of these clear Biblical qualifications, only the original 12 and Paul seem, unquestionably, to qualify for this term being used this way.
  - d. While Barnabas, Titus, and Epaphroditus were also called 'apostles' in the New Testament, perhaps they had been witnesses of the resurrected Christ at some point due to their close associations with the original 12 disciples.
  - e. My larger point is simply this: we need to be wary of folks who quickly call themselves 'apostles' these days. Generally, I find these people to be given over to self-apparent non-Biblical stances in other areas of their conduct and "ministry," and this should be an indication of their basic fraud.
7. Regardless, I think a larger point is being made here with the juxtaposition of the Twelve Tribes of Israel alongside the names of the 12 apostles.
8. Here, in the construction of The New Jerusalem, we are reminded of God's order of dispensations.
9. There is a difference in God's plan for Israel, and God's plan for the church. Great heresies, like Replacement Theology, arise when these dispensations are ignored or rebutted.
10. But ultimately, both are recognized for their purpose and role in the eternal state within these features of The New Jerusalem.

B. Continuing with the physical description of The New Jerusalem: **Cf. vs 15-17**)

NOTE: The angel who is with John has a measuring rod, and together they measure out the dimensions of The New Jerusalem. Putting these ancient terms into their modern equivalents, we learn the following:

1. The Holy City is laid out as a square, and it is approximately 1500 miles in each direction. (Some commentators say 1380 miles in each direction, but either way, this is a very large city).
2. Its length, breadth, and height are all equal. This has caused most commentators to claim The New Jerusalem is shaped like a cube.
  - a. Part of this rationale is because the equal dimensions of The New Jerusalem recall the holy of holies in the Temple where the Ark of the Covenant resided.
  - b. That location was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high (**Cf. 1 Kings 6:19**).
  - c. It could be argued that the entire New Jerusalem is the eternal “holy of holies” (**Cf. Revelation 21:22 for additional commentary**).

NOTE: The cube configuration seems the most obvious conclusion, but one other additional configuration also applies: a pyramid, one with vertical walls around the base.

3. There is nothing in the text to suggest a pyramid is NOT the layout of The New Jerusalem, and so it must also be considered. Personally, this is the configuration I am most inclined to imagine. Why? Several reasons:
  - a. **First**, remember, Satan is the great counterfeiter. Everything God does and everything He establishes, Satan tries to duplicate in some fashion so as to deceive.
  - b. Recall, too that Satan has access to heaven right now. He is not prevented from having access until the midpoint of the Tribulation as we’ve already learned.
  - c. My personal belief is Satan has seen or perceived, in some fashion, the intentions and design of The Holy City detailed here in this text. And Satan has, through the ages, tried to emulate that.
  - d. All over the world, from ancient times, pyramids appear as a symbol of occultic intention. Also called ‘ziggurats,’ these pyramids all share some common features.
  - e. After God confused the peoples with many different languages in **Gen. Ch. 11**, the people, who had been one large homogenous group before that point were scattered across the globe and each group or resulting culture built....pyramids!
  - f. I think the Tower of Babel was, in its original plan, a pyramid. I believe it was Satan’s effort to counterfeit something he had seen in heaven and to use it for his own purposes.
  - g. **Second**, the design of a pyramid could uniquely call attention to “God over all.” His position, His light, His radiance, and His power would emanate from the very top and be over all the city, with all points being able to see and relate to this specific superior position.
  - h. These things are not explicitly said in the text, but they are not unreasonable suggestions either. (All ‘food for thought...’)

4. A few more architectural details are laid out:
  - a. The wall around the city is Jasper. (I'm not sure if this is the jasper we know or the clear diamond one mentioned in **vs. 11**)
  - b. The city is made of pure gold, '*pure as glass*' (the Greek term here does not denote transparency [like the glass we know] but rather '*purity*.' It is free from any contaminant.
  - c. NOTE: Interesting that no other lesser valuable metals are mentioned: i.e. silver, copper, etc. Only gold.
  - d. The foundations of the city (remember, there are 12 layers or components here) are "*decorated with every kind of precious stone.*"
  - e. NOTE: While there is some uncertainty as to the relationship between the names of the stones in the original languages versus our modern equivalents, most of these precious stones appear to be the same as those mentioned on the High Priest's breastplate (**Cf. Exodus 28:17-20**).
  - f. These were tribal stones, associated with the 12 tribes of Israel, and most of those mentioned in **Exodus** show up here in **Revelation 21:19-20**. Because the 12 foundations seem to be mostly connected with the 12 apostles, this is all little more than an academic exercise.
  - g. Then, in **vss. 22 and 23**, we read that there is no temple in this New Jerusalem, for "*the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*" To me, this takes away a bit from the cuboidal "Holy of Holies" argument mentioned earlier and gives a bit more credence to the pyramid angle, but again – that's just how I see it.
  - h. No outside illumination (i.e. Sun, Moon) is needed. Again, we're reminded that the glory of God is this city's light (*same as in vs. 11*).
  - i. This doesn't necessarily mean that there will not be a Sun or Moon in the New Heavens and New Earth (there may not be); it just means that, if there are, they have no role to play with this city.

## II. Interactions with this New Jerusalem – (**Cf. vss. 24-27**)

NOTE: This is a challenging part of this chapter.

- A. There are those who live INSIDE the city, and there are those who live OUTSIDE the city.
  1. We are not told of what distinguishes one group from the other. We are only told that there are two types of populations here: those inside and those outside.
  2. This difference does not seem to be any suggestion of a difference of status or privilege. It is also important to note that "nations" and "kings" (rulers over subsets of population) still continue to exist outside of the physical bounds of The New Jerusalem.
    - a. Some commentators have surmised that those who live INSIDE The New Jerusalem are glorified saints (you and I), and those living outside

the city are those faithful who are still living at the end of The Millennial Kingdom.

- b. This idea holds that “*the nations*” outside the city are composed of saved people who survive The Millennial Kingdom without dying and without joining Satan’s final rebellion.
- c. It further suggests that these individuals undergo some sort of transformation that suits them for life in The Eternal State. They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall.
- d. We already know they will be unresurrected human beings, and so perhaps they will inhabit the new earth, which seems, by all Biblical assessments, to be Paradise restored for the rest of eternity (***Cf. Revelation 22:1-5***).
- e. We cannot be certain, and so we should not argue too much here. We just need to understand that the Bible lays out two different groups of people.
- f. One lives in the city, the other visits it and brings their glory and splendor into it.
- g. Regardless, the text tells us the city’s gates will never be shut, so there is no threat, no possible invasion of corruption, and nothing which would defile.
- h. As though to emphasize this last point, we are told in **vs. 27** that the only population which exists in this eternal state is that group which has its names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

NOTE: Let’s move on to **Chapter 22** and quickly wrap up with the first five verses: Some features or attributes are repeated here. However, there are a few new things mentioned:

- B. A pure river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and goes down the middle of the great street of the city:
  1. This is the fountain of the water of life which God promised to the thirsty in the previous chapter (***Cf. Revelation 21:6***).
    - a. Its ultimate source is God Himself, for it proceeds from His throne.
    - b. John notes that this water is “*clear as crystal*.” The purity and clarity of it is remarkable to John. We can only imagine!
    - c. By all assessments, it is a literal river in the eternal sense.
  2. This river is lined with species of trees known as “the tree of life.” The Greek term here denotes several types of trees – with each being called a ‘tree of life.’
    - a. Jesus said to the Church at Ephesus in **Revelation 2:7** that He would give the overcomer “*to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*” (This is what we are reading about here).
    - b. These trees are continually producing 12 different kinds of fruits every month, and the leaves are used for the “*healing*” (Greek can mean “*service*”) of the nations. (A couple of academic questions):
      - Does ‘months’ here suggest lunar cycles are still in play?

- What sort of 'healing' or 'service' is needed in The Eternal State?
- 3. Our role in The Eternal State will be one of serving God (**Cf. vss. 3-5**).
  - a. This will be a face-to-face service.
  - b. We will be marked with ownership by God
  - c. Part of our service will be to continue to reign. (This too, suggests that there is some construct of nations, population differentiations, etc.) in The Eternal State.
  - d. We cannot imagine the bliss of this Eternal State, however, by faith we believe it and we look forward to it.