

- John wrote the letter of Revelation to a group of Christ-followers who were being persecuted from the outside and struggling with problems on the inside of the faith. They all knew people or were that person, who had lost their job because of their faith. Been kicked out of their family. Lost their social status. Some had even lost people to death because of it. It was very real.
- The temptation to throw in the towel or take the easy road was very strong. So John wrote to them to describe his vision of what heaven will be like.
- This whole series is predicated on the idea the what we think about the next life impacts how we live this life.
- Revelation is less concerned about God's activity within the history of earth, but more about pointing towards a time when God will end history and bring about the triumph of good and the final judgment of evil. God is in control of history.
- One of the Discipleship Families in our church asked a question this week which I found intriguing. On a scale of 1-10, how often do you think about heaven or eternity.
- I wonder how we each would respond? Are we so consumed by today and tomorrow that we think of little else? Are we so caught up in the goals of this year and the plans we have for this summer that eternity seems so very distant?
- When I decide how to treat a friend, how to spend my money, where to use my time, what job to take, whether or not to serve with youth or children, do we ever make those decisions based, at least in part, by what will happen after we die?
- How we think about eternity is what can encourage us through dark times. It is what can give us the energy and desire to put others first. It is what can help us make difficult choices and do more than we ever thought possible.
- Last week we looked at the new heaven and the new earth.
- We saw that heaven is all sin and effects of sin removed and everything good restored to be even better than at the beginning.
- In the end, we saw that our identity as Gods children will be able to be lived out to its fullest. Our identity as everything we were designed to be will be restored.
- Today we are going to see the amazing truth that **Heaven restores God's presence.**
- It is the ultimate homecoming.

• On the heels of last week's picture, we get another one that is utterly fascinating to me. *Revelation 21:9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*

- The city is described once again as the bride of Christ.
- New Jerusalem is compared to a bride. It's because the redeemed are forever united to God and the Lamb. At this point, the marriage has already taken place. We read about that back in chapter 19 verse 7. That's why the words "The Lamb's Wife" are used.
- We've already seen what heaven and earth are going to be like – why this focus on a city?
- It is like God was saying, "I've shown you the neighborhood, let me show you where you will live."

11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of

the Lamb. 15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. 17 The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. 18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. 19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass. 22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- Remember, the point of what John is writing is not to give us the full picture. God focuses on what is most important and not on what we want to know.
- There is so much here with the symbolism that we could spend hours on this, so let me focus in on several key ideas within this description.
- Let's consider the city first:

I. Heaven – The New Jerusalem

- Why a city?
- From the very beginning, mankind built cities. Often, it was in contravention of what God had instructed.
- Cain, one of the first people mentioned in the bible, killed his brother and was told by God that his lot was to wander and have a nomadic existence. He rejected this and settled down and built a city in rebellion to God's word.
- Humanity's instructions were to fill the earth. Instead, they settled and built a city where they began to erect a tower called Babel, through which they would gain control of God.
- The symbology through the bible labels Babylon the city which was anti-God. Cities that had their own kind of glory, but were built to rebel against God. (See Revelation 17)
- The first Jerusalem was the seat of God's presence with Israel until they rebelled and God let the city be destroyed.
- There is huge significance that at the end, God makes a city perfectly.
- So what is that city like?

A. It is brilliant.

11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

- The value of jewels is in their ability to reflect and refract light.
- The new Jerusalem is a place where there is jewels and gold everywhere.
- It is a rainbow of colors. There are gems of all kinds. Why? Just to be pretty? There is more than that. The very light of God reflects and refracts off of all this beauty to create something even more brilliant.
- This is a place of *"unmistakable beauty, designed to reflect the glory of God in a spectrum of brilliant color."* (Dr. John Walvoord)

B. It is big.

15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

- This needs some perspective. 12,000 stadia is about 1,500 miles.
- That would mean the city would go from Maine to Florida and all the way out to Colorado.
- It is immense. But if that doesn't help you, it's because you need to picture it in 3D.
- It would extend into outer space (the atmosphere is about 300 miles thick)
- Considers that the USA has 3.8 million square miles. The new city has 3.4 BILLION cubic miles of space. How'd you like to live on the top floor.
- The point of what John saw is not the specific makeup of the city. Obviously it seems fanciful to us. Whether or not this is symbolic or actual, God is showing John two things.
- One, it is big enough for all nations. There is not shortage of room. Everyone and anyone who wants to follow Jesus will have room. He desires everyone to come in. It shows the heart of God. Extravagant. Inviting.
- More important is the shape. Did you catch it? Cube.
- Why is that significant? If you go back in history to the Tabernacle, the tent that the Israelites made to worship, God gave specific directions on how to make it. In the center of the tabernacle was the most holy place. The place where God's presence was to rest. It was the place that the priest could only go once a year. It was utterly holy and amazing. You probably guessed what shape it was? That's right, a cube.
- When they built the temple, they built a new holy of holies. It was larger but it was still – that's right – a cube.
- This entire city is one enormous holy of holies.

C. It is beautiful.

- John describes the jewels. Even these are not haphazard. He lists 12 different jewels that make up the foundation. They are the exact same 12 jewels that God instructed the Israelites to put into the priestly garments for them to wear when coming to God to hear from him and make decisions. (Exodus 28:15-20)

Exodus 28	Revelation 21
Carnelian	Ruby
Chrysolite	Chrysolite
Beryl	Beryl
Turquoise	Turquoise
Lapis lazuli	Sapphire
Emerald	Emerald
Jacinth	Jacinth
Agate	Agate
Amethyst	Amethyst
Topaz	Topaz
Onyx	Onyx
Jasper.	Jasper

- The new Jerusalem it is not just good, but the best. Everything up until then is a shadow pointing towards what will be.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

- The gates are pearls. Consider how pearls are formed around an irritation, an intrusion, an injury. These great pearls show God's beauty from the injury and injustice done to Jesus.

D. It is a place of unity and security.

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- The gates will never be shut – completely secure. There is no danger – the purpose of gates was to protect and to keep people out. Not necessary here.
- It will be a place for all the nations – unity. All the different nations of the earth will be together. Seamlessly. Without conflict or problems.
- It will be perfect. There will be nothing sinful that can enter it.
- Once again we get a word of warning – the people that have access to all this are those whose names are written in the book of life. The only way you get your name there is through trusting in Jesus, asking forgiveness for your sins and turning to follow him.
- Don't wait. Turn your life to him. Heaven wouldn't be the same if we weren't all there.

II. Heaven is all about the presence of God.

- The most dominant characteristic of the holy city is the presence of God's Glory.
22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

- They city is all about God's presence.
- His presence is what will wipe away all fear, doubt and tears.
- His presence is what will inspire people to bring their glory to him.
- His presence is what will bring joy and satisfaction.
- His presence is what brings out the brilliance of the city.
- The size and shape are to show that God's presence is always there.
- The beauty of the city and the glory of the people are made so by his presence.
- His presence is what will make us completely secure.
- It is his presence that brings complete unity to all those who choose to follow him.

- **Heaven restores God's presence.**

- When we get to heaven, God's presence will be how it was intended from the beginning.
- Consider how it began.
- God created Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. They knew God. They walked with God.
- We are told they spent time with him in the cool of the day. They had questions, he had answers. They dialogued. They laughed together. They sat in silence watching the sunset. It was fulfilling, relaxing and amazing.
- When they sinned, the penalty was that they were thrust away from God's presence. God is holy and perfect and could not leave sin unpunished.
- They had to leave the garden. They could no longer talk to him directly. The best part of every day was lost.
- God implemented his plan. He sent his son who died and took our place. When he did, he restored the relationship. We can now speak directly to God through Jesus. We have the Spirit. But, we still do not have the tangible presence of the Lord with us.
- We do not see him physically. We cannot speak with him face to face.
- In heaven, that all changes.

- When we are in the new city, all the things that would interfere with enjoying God's presence will be gone. We will have only the good. The excitement, the security, the love, the comfort, of being with our heavenly Father.
- This is the promise of Jesus. Because he died for us, we not only have his presence today, but in eternity, we will sit down together to eat and be face to face.
- Live in anticipation of what is to come, when **Heaven restores God's presence.**