

Revelation 21.9-27

- The bride of Christ -

Author: Evert Jan Hempenius

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Introduction

- ❖ More and more people live in cities. Cities offer opportunities for many people. Cities have a light and a dark side. The positive side is presented by promising high-rise offices, shopping malls, wide avenues, beautiful parks, the glitz and glamour of everyday life. The dark side is found in those areas where the less fortunate live, on the streets, and in some countries the slums, the areas where gangs rule the streets. Sometimes it is only a highway, a railway or a canal that separates the rich from the poor, the fortunate from the unlucky. Big cities reflect on a large scale the human condition.
 - They are a creation of mankind, like the old city of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9).¹ Revelation 21:9-27 depicts a completely different city, the Holy Jerusalem. It is called a bride. It is not a building project of mankind. It is a new creation created by God. It is a gift of God, an eternal residence for the new community of Jesus Christ, the Lamb.
 - Revelation 19:7: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For **the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.**”
 - Revelation 21:9-27 stands in sharp contrast to the city of Rome (Babylon). She is not a bride but a prostitute. She will be destroyed (Rev 17 and 18).
- ❖ The Holy City reflects the glory of God. This is one of the main themes in Revelation: “and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—**to him be glory and power for ever and ever!** Amen” (Rev 1:6; See also: 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12).

¹ See also: <https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/files/pub/word/Genesis%2011.1-9.pdf>

- Revelation 21:9-27 is the culmination of the grand story of the Bible: God dwelling among his people. It all started with the creation and the Paradise, the erection of the tabernacle and then Jerusalem with the temple. God tabernacled among his people in Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14). The Church became the new temple (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21) as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Each believer became a temple (1 Cor 6:19).
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Revelation to John. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a stand-alone. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ The book of Revelation is like a painting. It is impossible to study one passage without looking at other parts and the book as a whole.
- ❖ A brief outline of the Book of Revelation:²

Introduction (Rev 1:1-3)	
Rev 1:1-3	The origin of and the command to write this Revelation.
The Book of Revelation (Rev 1:4-22:21)	
Rev 1:4-8	The opening liturgical setting.
Rev 1:9-3:22	PART 1
Rev 4:1-22:6	PART 2
Rev 22:7-21	The closing liturgical setting.

- PART 1: The risen and exalted Christ sends his seven messages to the seven churches in the Roman Province Asia.
- PART 2: The heavenly courtroom and the judgment of God, ending with the descent of the new heaven and earth.

² This outline for sermons is very brief and does not discuss all the (many) different theories about the structures and outlines of the Book of Revelation. Beale (1999) provides a detailed outline. For discussion see Garrow (1997).

- PART 2: Three main stages can be distinguished in this part of Revelation. Each stage is introduced by a vision of the heavenly courtroom where God resides as the Creator-King and Judge of all creation.

Part 2 (Rev 4:1-22:11)	
Stage 1	Rev 4:1-7:17 > the first six seals.
Stage 2	Rev 8:1-11:14 > (the seventh seal) and the first six trumpets.
Stage 3	Rev 11:15-22:11 > (the seventh trumpet) and the seven bowls of God's wrath > the two cities: Babylon versus the New Jerusalem.
Stage 3 (Rev 11:15-22:11) – in more detail	
Rev 11:15-16:21	<p>The war between Christ and the powers of Satan, the Beast, the false prophet, and Babylon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 11:15-19 > The heavenly courtroom. • Rev 12:1-14:20 > The war between Christ and Satan, the victory of Christ. • Rev 15:1-16:21 > The seven bowls of Gods wrath, the victory over and the destruction of Babylon.
Rev 17:1-21:8	<p>The destruction of Babylon and the final judgement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 17:1-19:10 > The fall of Babylon. • Rev 19:11-21:8 > The final judgement.
Rev 21:9-22:5	The vision of the New Jerusalem and the New Creation.

The vision of the New Jerusalem and the New Creation (Rev 21:9-22:5)	
The bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev 21:9-10)	
Introduction (Rev 21:9-10)	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." 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.
Its shining glory (Rev 21:11-23)	
A. The glory (Rev 21:11)	It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

B. The wall, the gates and foundations
(Rev 21:12-14)

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. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

C. The size of the city
(Rev 21:15-17)

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 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. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.

B'. The wall, the gates and foundations
(Rev 21:15-21)

The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

A'. The glory
(Rev 21:22-23)

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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.

Entering the city (Rev 21:24-27)

The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour (glory; ESV) into it.

On no day will its gates ever be shut,
for there will be no night there.

The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.

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 inner city (Rev 22:1-5)

The water and
the tree of life
(Rev 22:1-2)

Then the angel showed me
the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal,
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb
down the middle of the great street of the city.
On each side of the river stood the tree of life,
bearing twelve crops of fruit,
yielding its fruit every month.
And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
No longer will there be any curse.

The servants of
God
(Rev 22:3-5)

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city,
and his servants will serve him.
They will see his face,
and his name will be on their foreheads.
There will be no more night.
They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun,
for the Lord God will give them light.
And they will reign for ever and ever.

❖ Revelation seems to be structured as ABCB'A'.

- Thematically:
 - the glory (A)
 - the wall and the gates (B)
 - the measurement and its size (C)
 - the wall and the gates (B')
 - the glory (A')
- The purpose of this structure is to focus on the central part.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

The purpose of Revelation

- ❖ The purpose of the Book of Revelation is fourfold:
 - 1. Revelation: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known” (Rev 1:1).
 - 2. Promise: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city” (Rev 22:14).
 - 3. Warning: “And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev 22:19).
 - 4. Call: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev 22:17).
- ❖ Revelation 22:1-2: “the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life.”

The character of the book

- ❖ The Book of Revelation is Trinitarian (God – Holy Spirit – Jesus Christ; Rev. 1:4-5) in character.
 - God is the first and the last (Rev. 1:8) – Jesus Christ is the first and the last (Rev. 1:17).
 - Jesus Christ speaks to the churches (Rev. 2:1-6) and the churches are summoned to listen to what the Spirit (Rev. 2:7) says.
 - Note the Trinitarian character of Rev. 5:
 - God, Creator residing on his throne;
 - The Son, the Lamb, standing in the midst;
 - The seven spirits, sent by the Son to the corners of the earth (East, West, North, South), who is identical with the Holy Spirit of God.
- ❖ The Book of Revelation is foremost a liturgical book with prayers, doxologies, confessions, prophecies and visions. It shows the heavenly liturgy in images and this liturgy affects the history of this world when the plagues of God strike this earth. Rev. 4:11 explains why: **“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”**
 - This is the priority in the life of every human being: to glorify God.

- This liturgical book reminds us of the liturgy in the tabernacle (especially) and the temple of the Old Testament. This explains the many references to the altars and the priestly appearances of Christ and some of his angels.
 - Revelation 5 contains three songs of glorification and one acclamation “Amen”.
- ❖ The book of Revelation is also a **prophetic** book about the past, the present and the future. It sheds light on the past, the present situation of the seven churches in Asia Minor, and the future, culminating in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth.
 - From chapter 4 onwards the judgment of God is the dominating theme. He will do justice (Rev. 4-5; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 21:1-15 and other passages).

Reading and Understanding

- ❖ Reading and understanding the Book of Revelation requires:
 - Profound knowledge of the Old Testament.
 - Especially the books of Exodus and Numbers, Ezekiel and Daniel are important for study. These books are related to the oppression and deliverance of the people of God (Egypt and Babylon). Genesis 2-3 and 1 Kings 6 provide the necessary background for understanding Revelation 21:9-22:5.
 - Knowledge of the Greek-Roman world of the first century.
 - Knowledge of figures of speech, because of all the metaphors and other figures of speech.
 - Knowledge of the structure of Revelation (see above).
 - (Elementary) knowledge of Hermeneutics: how can I read and understand this book?

Christ revealed

- ❖ John received this Revelation from Jesus Christ and at the same time, this Revelation reveals the risen and exalted Christ, who holds the keys of (life and) death and Hades (Rev. 1:17). John understood the words he heard, the visions he saw, though sometimes they needed to be explained to him (Rev. 1:19-20).
- ❖ John wrote down what he heard and saw in this book and sent it to the seven churches in Asia Minor, an important province of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In these seven messages to the churches of Asia, Jesus Christ addresses major aspects of church life. He praises and rebukes them and gives them promises of the life to come. Christians, members of these churches, understood these messages. Twice are people mentioned by name and they were warned against a movement called the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6; 2:15), active among the churches. These Christians were far more familiar with the figures of speech used in the Revelation than we are today.

- Figures of speech are not always easily understood by 21st-century readers. Sometimes they are explained, more often not. Figures of speech allow more than one explanation and application. That explains the multitude of commentaries and theories.

Hermeneutical traditions

- ❖ In the process of explaining and applying the prophecies of this book, the interpreter should ask himself two questions:
 - To which exegetical tradition do I belong? There are a plethora of traditions, especially in the Anglo-American World. To mention only three:
 - Amillennialism;
 - Postmillennialism;
 - Premillennialism.
 - Secondly, the interpreter should be aware of his situation and the local Christian community. What is my political-religious situation and how does this situation affect my reading and understanding of the Book of Revelation?

A short note on the symbolical use of numbers

- ❖ Numbers play an important and symbolic role in the Book of Revelation.
 - They have a numerical value but, what is more important, they have a symbolical value. The numbers which are used can be grouped as follows:

Group	Number	Meaning
Triangle numbers ³	3 = 1 + 2	Vertical axis: heaven, earth, and the waters beneath the earth. It is also the number of God.
	6 = 1 + 2 + 3	A number of near perfection or completeness.
	10 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4	A number of fullness.

³ Triangle numbers: 1, 3, 6 and 10:



Square numbers ⁴	$4 = 2 \times 2$	The horizontal plane, the four corners of the earth. This is often reflected in the use of four designations for the same noun: every tribe (1) and language (2) and people (3) and nation (4) (Rev 5:9). And: the dragon (1), that ancient serpent (2), who is the devil (3), or Satan (4) (Rev 20:1).
	$144 = 12 \times 12$	This number can mean: the people of God (12) will inherit the whole earth.
Cubic numbers	$1000 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$	The number of space and time of God. The Most Holy place was a cube (1 Kings 6:20). It is also the number of eternity or the number of the Day of the Lord.
Special case	12×1000	“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” (Rev 21:16).
Special cases	2	Number of a (true) witness
	$7 = 3 + 4$	The number of (holy) fullness
	$12 = 3 \times 4$	The number of the people of God. The number 12 is prominent in Revelation 21:9-27(!).
	42 = 1260 = times, time and half time (Rev 11:2-3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5)	This number refers to the 42 sites of rest of the Israelites during their wandering in the desert before they entered the promised land (Num 33).

Verse 9, 14, 22, 23

- ❖ “The lamb” = “ἀρνίον”: the crucified, resurrected and glorified Christ.
 - The Lamb refers to the exodus out of Egypt (Ex 12; Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7).
 - The Lamb is introduced in Revelation 5:6 “Then I (John) saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne.”
 - “looking as if it had been slain” refers to the crucifixion.

⁴ Square numbers: 1, 4, 9, 16, 25:



- “standing” refers to the resurrection
- “in the centre of the throne” refers to glorification.
- The Lamb is worthy to take the scroll (5:1) and to open its seals (Rev 5:5, 9; 6: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1): “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12; 17).
 - This scroll is probably the Book of Life (Rev 3:5; 13: 8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).
- “The Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:17).
 - Those who wear white robes “have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14; see also Rev 12:10).
- The Lamb is victorious: “There before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (Rev 14:1; see also Rev 17:14).
- The church is the bride of the Lamb (Rev 19:9, 21:9, 21:14). After the final judgment, all those whose names were written in the Book of Life will live forever in communion with the Lamb and with God (Rev 21:22, 23).

Revelation 2, 3 and Revelation 21, 22

- ❖ Each of the members of the seven churches, as representatives of all faithful Christians, is encouraged by Christ and his promises.

Revelation 2, 3	Revelation 21, 22
“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life , which is in the paradise of God” (Rev 2:7).	“On each side of the river stood the tree of life , bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2).
“I will never blot out his name from the book of life , but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels” (Rev 3:5).	“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 ” (Rev 21:27).
“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God ; and I will also write on	“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 ” (Rev 21:10).

him my new name" (Rev 3:12).	
"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Rev 3:21).	"No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (...) And they will reign for ever and ever" (Rev 22:1-5).

- ❖ Especially the promise given to the faithful members of the church of Philadelphia (Rev3:7-13) is enlightening. **The new Jerusalem will be equal to the temple of my (Christ) God.**

Revelation 21:9-27 and the Old Testament

- ❖ Two passages are of special importance, both related to the temple.
 - 1 Kings 6:19-22 (the first temple):
 - "He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. **The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold,** and he also overlaid the altar of cedar. Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. So he overlaid the whole interior with gold."
 - Ezekiel 40:1-4 (vision of the second temple):
 - "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there. **In visions of God he took me** (Rev21:10) to the land of Israel and set me on a very **high mountain** (see Rev 21:10), on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and **a measuring rod** (Rev 21:15) in his hand. The man said to me, 'Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the house of Israel everything you see.'" (See also Revelation 21:10-23; Ezekiel 48:15–22.)

Exposition

Before

- ❖ **"Then."** After God has completed his judgment (17:1-21:8; 15:1), the final part of the Revelation is shown to John.

Verse 9-11 (The descend of the city, and its glory)

- ❖ **“Then the angel showed me.”** This angel has been introduced in Revelation 15:7. He is one of the seven angels who will carry out the wrath of God (Rev 16). One or two of these angels showed John the fate of the city of Babylon (Rev 17:1, 2) and the bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9).
 - The city of Babylon is adorned: “The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.”
 - **“showed.”** It is part of the Revelation of God (Rev 1:1; 4:1).
- ❖ **“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”**
 - This is a sequel to Revelation 19:7: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” It is a profound mystery (Eph 5:32).
 - The bride is the church. The bride is also a new city, the creation of God.
 - **“The Lamb”** see above. He “loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev 1:5; 5:9).
- ❖ **“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high”**
 - Historical context: The second temple had been destroyed by the Romans (70 CE). At this point in history, there is no physical temple.
 - The revelation is given in the Spirit. John is four times carried away in the Spirit, twice by the glorified Christ, and twice by an angel:

	Location	“Guide”
1:10	The island of Patmos	The glorified Christ
4:2	Heaven	The glorified Christ
17:3	The desert	The angel
21:10	A mountain great and high	The angel

- Revelation 17:3 and 21:10 are subordinate to Revelation 4:2.
- John shares the experience “in the Spirit” with Ezekiel (Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 37:1; 43:5). Ezekiel 40:2: “In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.”
- ❖ **“the Holy City, Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God”**
 - Holy means chosen and devoted to God. See also Isaiah 52:1.

- The city is not built by men, but a creation and a gift by God. It will replace the old world order: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Rev 21;1, 2). The Holy City the new Jerusalem is the new heaven and the new earth.
 - Also Hebrews 11:10: "For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." See also Hebrews 12:22, 23: "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven."
- The Holy City is a temple-city and a city-temple at the same time. See Revelation 3:12.
- Babylon and the Holy city cannot exist alongside each other.

❖ **"It shone with the glory of God"**

- This glory was already described in Revelation 4. See also Isaiah 60:1-4. The "glory of God" refers to his presence. "God's glory, which is none other than his awesome, tabernacling presence with his people."⁵ Exodus 24:16: "And the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai." 1 Kings 8:11: "And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple."
- "jasper." It is difficult to give a precise description of the colour of this gem. John might have envisioned a deep red gem. Boxall refers to Pliny: "The ancient jasper, unlike its modern counterpart, was often transparent (Pliny, *Natural History* 37.115)."⁶ Verse 12-14 (*the wall, the gates and the foundations of the city*)



❖ **"It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates"**

- Twelve refers to the people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel. The angels do not guard the gates, because there is no danger and the gates will be opened all time.
- These angels probably represented the people of God in front of God. There might be a connection with the angels mentioned in chapters 2 and 3.

⁵ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1066).

⁶ Boxall, I. (2006, p. 301).

- There is a discussion about the identity of these angels. 1. Are they guardian angels? 2. Are they the responsible representatives of the congregations? They don't have to protect the gates, because all enemies have been destroyed.

❖ **"the names of the twelve tribes of Israel"**

- Revelation 7:4-8 mentions the names of the tribes. This enumeration recalls Numbers 2:2-32: "The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family. **On the east, toward the sunrise**" (Num 2:1-31).
- The Jews (and the twelve apostles) expected the restoration of the Kingdom over Israel (Acts 1:6-8) and the twelve tribes.
- **"There were three gates on the east,..."** See also Ezekiel 48:31-34.

❖ **"The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."**

- See also Ephesians 2:19-20: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, with Christ Jesus (the Lamb) himself as the chief cornerstone."

Verse 15-17 (*the measurement of the city*)

❖ **"The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls."**

- Ezekiel 40:1-4 (see above). The meaning of this measurement is found in the description of the size of the city.

❖ **"The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide."**

- **"12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long."**
- A Greek stadia is about 190 meters / 630 feet. 12,000 stadia equals 2300 km / 1430 miles. This is the distance between Rome and Jerusalem. Morris gives some examples: "Twelve thousand stadia is approximately 1,500 miles, the distance between London and Athens, between New York and Houston, between Delhi and Rangoon, between Adelaide and Darwin."⁷ Because the length, width and height have the same size, the city has the form of a cube. This recalls the Most Holy Place of the temple: **"The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high"** (1 Kings 6:20).
 - **The symbolic meaning of a cube refers to the time and space of God.**

⁷ Morris, L. (1987, p. 239).

- “The holy city would stretch across the known world and into the heavens itself, perhaps indicating that the new heaven and new earth unite in the New Jerusalem!”⁸The combination of the numbers twelve and thousand and the form of cube accentuates the message that the people of God (twelve tribes) will dwell in the time and space of God.

❖ **“He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man’s measurement, which the angel was using.”**

- The number 144 (12 * 12) is a square number (see above) and refers to the earth. The number twelve refers to the people of God (compare Revelation 7:4-8).
- A cubit is the average length of a forearm. The size of the wall looks disproportionate compared to the size of the city. This indicates that these measurements should not be taken literally but symbolically.
- Compare ESV: “He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement.” The translation of the ESV is preferred. The solution might be found in Matthew 22:30: “**At the resurrection people** will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they **will be like the angels in heaven.**” Here in Revelation human measurement will be like angelic measurement. The distinction between heaven and earth will be uplifted. It will be one world, where people and angels will dwell together in the glory of God.

Verse 18-21 (*the wall and the gates of the city*)

❖ **“The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.”**

- “**jasper.**” See above verse 11.
- “**the city of pure gold.**” This recalls the description of the Most Holy place (1 Kings 6:20-22).
 - “**as pure as glass.**” The Greeks and Romans were capable of combining gold and glass. Perhaps John had this in mind when he described the glory of the city.⁹
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- The bride of the Lamb is adorned with gems and pearls.

⁸ Beasley-Murray, Revelation (p. 322) quoted by Thomas, J. C., & Macchia, F. D. (2016, p. 379).

⁹ “Gold glass or gold sandwich glass is a luxury form of glass where a decorative design in gold leaf is fused between two layers of glass. First found in Hellenistic Greece, it is especially characteristic of the Roman glass of the Late Empire in the 3rd and 4th century AD.” (Gold glass. (2021, May 24). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_glass)

- For the gems, compare Exodus 28:15-21, where a description is given of the priestly breast piece: "Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions—the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. It is to be square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double. Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes."
- Beale notes: "Strikingly, 1 Pet. 2:5 also affirms that believers simultaneously are building stones, a temple, and priests: 'you also, as living *stones*, are being built up as a spiritual *house* for a *holy priesthood*.'"¹⁰Verse 22-23 (*The glory of the city*)

❖ **"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."**

- **"Lord God Almighty."** He is the Creator, King of all Creation, the only Judge. See also Revelation 1:4, 8.
 - See also Revelation 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15.
- In verses, 15 to 17 the size of the city is described in terms of the Most Holy place. This room housed the ark of the covenant, which symbolized the throne of God. It was the inner part of the temple. Therefore it is understandable that there is not a temple found in the "Most Holy place." It is the other way around. The "Most Holy place" is the major part of the temple. Here, the temple is described as "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple", thus referring to the complete unity of God, the Lamb, and the people of God. Jesus Christ referred to this unity in John 17:21: "That all of them may be one, Father, **just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us.**"
 - See also above and Revelation 3:12. Beale suggests that: "a pillar in the temple of my God' might better be translated 'a pillar in **the temple that is my God.**"¹¹This indicates that John doesn't want to convey the idea of a physical city, but a living community, the bride of Christ. Beale summarizes his treatise: "The equation of God and the Lamb with the temple correlates well with our earlier figurative equation of redeemed saints with the new Jerusalem, its

¹⁰ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1081).

¹¹ (appositional genitive). Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1091).

foundations, its gates, and its wall.”¹² **“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.”**

- The light of the glory of God exceeds the light of the sun and the moon, which are luminaries created by the Creator. He lives in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16). The Creator is the source of light:
 - 1 John 1:5: “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.**” Light is equal to goodness and to life, where darkness stands for evil and death. See also 1 Peter 2:9 and John 8:12.
- “Now in the new cosmos God’s complete presence among his people is what beautifies them and satisfies their every need.¹³” See also Revelation 22:5. This is foreshadowed by the lampstand in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex 27:20, 21; Lev 24:2-40). These lamps were burning during the night. **In the tabernacle, there was no darkness.**
 - The new heaven and earth will be the new tabernacle and temple (Rev 21:9-27).
 - See also the promises of Isaiah 60:19 (Ezek 43: 2, 5): “The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.” See also
- “In the OT, the ‘shining face’ of God is a metaphor for divine favor (Ps 4:7; 31:17; 44:4; 67:2; 80:4, 8, 19; 89:16; 119:35).”¹⁴ The priestly blessing: “the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you” (Num 6:25).

Verse 24-27 (Entering the city)

- ❖ **“The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.”**
 - **“will walk by its light.”** Christ was walking “among the seven golden lampstands” (Rev 1:12, 13; 2:1). Christ was walking among the seven churches (lampstands). Now, the Christians are walking by the light of Christ.
 - Psalm 22:27: “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him.” (See also Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 2:2-5; 66:18).
 - **“walk.”** The word **“walk”** functions metaphorically as a description of one’s relationship or fellowship with God, Jesus, and/or the Light.”¹⁵ See also Revelation 3:4.

¹² Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1091).

¹³ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1094).

¹⁴ Aune, D. E. (1998, p. 1181).

- **“the nations.”**
 - The "nations" is often part of a fourfold reference: "every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6). Christ has been praised because he "purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). This is "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev 7:9). The nations are also subject to the wrath of the Lamb (Rev 11:18; 16:19). He will rule the nations with an iron sceptre (Rev 12:5; 19:5; Ps 2:9; Rev 2:26, 27). The nations are also involved with the adultery of Babylon the Great (Rev 14:8; 18:3) and were deceived by Satan (Rev 20:3, 8).
 - Finally, the nations will come and worship Christ (Rev 15:4) and they will be healed (Rev 22:2).
 - Who are these nations? See below.
- **“the kings of the earth.”** Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5).
 - The kings were fearing the wrath of the Lamb (Rev 6:15-17). The kings of the earth committed adultery with the great prostitute (Rev 17: 1, 2; 18:3,9). She is “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (Rev 17:18). The kings will wage war against the rider on the horse, the victorious Christ (Rev 19:19) and they will be destroyed. Are these kings the same as the kings who will bring their splendour and glory to the city of God?
 - Who are these kings of the earth? See below.
- **“their splendor” (“glory”; ESV)= “δόξα”.** Beale states that Revelation 21:24-26 “refers to the nations bringing glory and honor into the city is to highlight that they are bringing not literal riches but themselves as worshipers before God’s end-time presence.”¹⁶ **“On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.”** This must be understood against the practice that during the night the city gates were shut, due to the danger of intruders. The new Jerusalem will be a safe, glorious community.
- See also Revelation 22:5.
- ❖ **“The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”** See also Isaiah 60:11.
 - “Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev 15:4).

¹⁵ Thomas, J. C., & Macchia, F. D. (2016, p. 384).

¹⁶ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1095).

- ❖ **“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful,”**
 - See also Revelation 22:3.
 - **“impure.”** Ritually unclean.
 - **“shameful.”** This contrasts with the description of Babylon the Great: “This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF **THE ABOMINATIONS** OF THE EARTH.”
 - **“shameful”** = **“βδέλυγμα”**: 1. **something disgusting that arouses wrath, loathsome thing,¹⁷ detestable.** In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX), this word is found especially in the following books: Leviticus (13 times); Deuteronomy (19 times) and Ezekiel (17 times). Deuteronomy 18:9-13 is illustrative:
 - “When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the **detestable** ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is **detestable** to the LORD, and because of these **detestable** practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God.”
 - See also Leviticus 18 (sexual relationships). Idols are detestable in the eyes of the LORD (Deut 29:16). Everything that dishonours God and his glory is detestable and shameful.
 - **“shameful or deceitful”**:
 - Revelation 22:15: “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices **falsehood**. (= **“deceitful.”**)
 - Revelation 21:8: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”
 - These are so-called “Christians.” All other adversaries of God and the Lamb had already been thrown in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15).

❖ **“but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”**

¹⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 172).

- Revelation 1:5, 6 must be kept in mind: Jesus Christ, “who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”
- This verse restricts the “nations” and the “kings” of verse 24 to those people who have overcome. “With your blood you (Christ-the Lamb) purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9)
- John is not merely giving information about the future. It is also an exhortation and warning to stay faithful.¹⁸ Revelation 3:5: “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”¹⁹ See for “He who overcomes” also Revelation 2:7; 12; 17; 26-28; 3:12, 21.
 - See Psalm 87.
- Christ received the power to open the book of life (Rev 5:1-11).
- Revelation 13:8: “All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” (See also Revelation 17:8.)
- Revelation 20:12, 15: “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.” “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Application

Contemporary context

- ❖ Study the present situation of the city, the glory of man, reflected in high-rise offices, stadiums, theatres, shopping malls, and at the same time the beggars in the street, the slums. Identify the main problems people are facing.
 - Use this description, and inviting people to expect the Holy City of God, descending from heaven.

The purpose of Revelation

- ❖ Explain the purpose of Revelation:

¹⁸ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1102).

¹⁹ See also: <https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/files/pub/word/Revelation%203.1-6.pdf>

- The glorification of God and the Lamb.
- A call to Christians and to comfort them, especially those who suffer persecution and oppression, to be faithful.
 - “Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (Heb 11:16).
 - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17).
 - It is also a warning that: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars” (Rev 21:8) will not enter the city (Rev 21:27).
- To worship God. See also Revelation 1:6. The heavenly worship and the earthly worship coincide.

Glorify

- ❖ God as Creator-King-Judge. He is the Almighty.
 - The glory of God reveals his presence (Ex 16:7). Exodus 24:16: “And the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai.” 1 Kings 8:11: “And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.”
- ❖ Christ as the Lamb. He gave his life. He conquered death and Satan and will rule in eternity.

Warning

- ❖ Avoid going into too much detail.

Verse 9-10

- ❖ The Holy City is a creation of God, a gift to saved mankind. This city cannot co-exist together with Babylon.
 - She is the bride and the wife of the Lamb. This means that the city is a metaphor for the people of God.
 - “However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’” (1 Cor 2:9; Isa 64:4).
 - Wilcock writes: “Again Christian readers must remind themselves that the bride, the city, is none other than the church of Christ. The churches of John’s day, the churches of our own day, all of us are looking into a mirror in these verses. We are not merely spectators—we are ourselves the spectacle: it is we who are ‘God’s building’ (1 Cor. 3:9). The city shown to us here is what we shall be in the age to come, what in a sense we

already are, on the level of 'the heavenlies', and what in our earthly experience God is presently making of us."²⁰

Verse 11-23

- ❖ Describe the glory of the city.
- ❖ Explain the connection with the Most Holy place; it is a cube referring to the time and space of God.
 - "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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."

Verse 24-27

- ❖ This part must be understood against the background of Revelation 1:5, 6: He "has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."
- ❖ This passage is again a call to faithfulness and repentance.
 - See also Hebrews 12:22, 23: "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven."
- ❖ Even today we can walk by his light (Jn 8:12;

Quotes:

- ❖
- ❖ "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now...Come further up, come further in!"²¹"The things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."²²

²⁰ Wilcock, M. (1986, p 207).

²¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (1956, p. ?).

²² C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (1956, p. 165).

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