



We now begin in Rev. 21, the penultimate chapter of the Bible. When chapter 20 ends, it described all the incorrigibly wicked dying the second death, incinerated in the lake of fire. John wrote, "Then Death and Hades were cast into *the lake of fire*. This is *the second death*. And anyone *not found written in the Book of Life* was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15). Christ depicts it as Gehenna fire, with its "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:50).

Notice, though, after this scene, death won't exist nor any graves with dead people in it, for all humans will have either been *transformed into spirit beings* or will have been *burnt up in the lake of fire*.

In 2 Peter 3 it says the earth and its atmosphere will be transformed by this purifying fire, "But *the day of the Lord* will come as a thief in the night [it begins at a certain point but can last through all the resurrections and judgments], in which *the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which *the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?* Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for *new heavens and a new earth* in which *righteousness dwells*" (2 P. 3:10-13).

This is when the prophecy is fulfilled which says, "'You shall *trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* on the day that I do this,' says the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 4:3).

Apparently, as a result of the incineration of the surface of the earth, where all the soil is burnt up (in which so much blood was shed there), the oceans are totally evaporated (where so many perished or drowned) and only the melted minerals remain. Nothing is left to remind God or the resurrected saints of the pain and death and of all of man's sins committed under the old order. Now a new and righteous order begins—starting totally purified!

John describes this new order, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, *the tabernacle of*

*God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away*'" (Rev. 21:1-4).

God the Father descends with this beautiful New Jerusalem on a renewed earth to finally dwell with the redeemed mankind. As *Expositor's* brings out, "The Greek word for "new" (*kaine*) means *new in quality, fresh, rather than recent or new in time (neos)*...it is...*not a second heaven and earth*."

George E. Ladd makes this startling admission, "Throughout *the entire Bible, the ultimate destiny* of God's people is *an earthly destiny*. In *typical dualistic Greek thought* [by Plato, Plutarch and Philo] the universe was divided into two realms: the earthly or transitory, and the eternal spiritual world. Salvation consisted of the flight of the soul from the sphere of the transitory and ephemeral to the realm of eternal reality. However, *biblical thought always places man on a redeemed earth, not in a heavenly realm removed from earthly existence*" (p. 275). This a key point to understand the Greek-Christian origin of *the soul's immortality* and *of a pagan heaven and hell!*

Paul described this moment when God the Father arrives, "Then comes the end, *when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death*. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. *Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him* who put all things under Him, *that God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Just as the Church, as the Bride, will celebrate the wedding supper with Christ at the start of the Millennium, which indicates a lasting, personal and intimate relationship with Him, so the Bride now also prepares to celebrate a lasting, personal and intimate relationship with God the Father (see vs. 9). He will then lovingly and caringly wipe away all the tears of pain, suffering, and tragic experiences.

As Ladd points out, "During the church age, God indwells His church, which is His temple (Eph. 2:22); but this is a dwelling 'in the Spirit,' which can be apprehended *only by faith, not by sight* (2 Cor. 5:17).

In the consummation [of the age], all this is changed: *faith will be changed to sight*, and ‘they shall see His face’ (Rev. 22:4)...*All the promises of God’s covenant with men, made first through Abraham, renewed through Moses, and embodied in Christ, are at last brought to full realization...The tears here represent all human sorrow, tragedy, and evil.* Accompanying the glorious vision of God will be *a transformed mode of existence in which the sorrows and evils of existence in the old order are left far behind*” (p. 277).

John writes, “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, *I make all things new.*’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘*It is done!* I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. *I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.* He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is *the second death*” (Rev. 21:5-8).

God the Father says the old order is over--all has been carried out according to His Plan of Salvation. He then reveals *the new harmony of things to come.* The New Jerusalem will become the headquarters of the Universe, with God the Father reigning supreme, Jesus Christ below Him as the heir of all things and we as His co-heirs, and then come the holy angels.

As Paul said, “The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* For I consider that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* For the earnest expectation of *the creation* eagerly waits for *the [glorifying]* of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:18-19). The word “creation” here means, “the sum total of what has been created” (*Complete Word Study Dictionary*)--that is, all of the Universe.

Notice who are going to participate in this New Jerusalem—those who have overcome by remaining faithful to Christ and *keeping God’s commandments to the end.* As God says in the next chapter, “*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city*” (Rev. 22:14).

In contrast, as a warning to all who read these verses, God reminds everyone of *who won’t enter the*

*New Jerusalem*—the incorrigibly wicked who never repented or ceased from their sinful ways--they will instead suffer the second death in the lake of fire.

In this next vision, John sees more details of the New Jerusalem: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘*Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.*’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me *the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.* Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:* three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and *on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*” Rev. 21:9-14).

The New Jerusalem shines with the resplendent glory of God, similar to that of a crystal-like jasper stone, which most commentators believe in those days it meant a diamond--“clear as a crystal.” It has twelve gates and each has the name of one of the tribes of Israel. *God has not forgotten His promises to Abraham and his spiritual descendants of Israel* receive the blessing of entering this holy city.

As Paul said, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. *And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:26-29). He later called all the church members, “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Having the gates of the New Jerusalem named after the 12 tribes of Israel also makes the case for those 144,000 who are described in Rev. 7:3-8 as “Israelites”--being the Church members at that time.

Now, just as the gates have names, so do its 12 foundations, each named after one of the twelve apostles. (John must have been shocked and yet so honored to see *his name* there, but he is so modest and humble he doesn’t brag by writing about it here.) *The Tyndale Commentary* mentions, “The combination of the twelve tribes in vs. 12 and the twelve apostles is a way of saying that *Israel of old and the Christian*

*Church are united [and not opposed] in God's final scheme of things" (p. 250).*

John continues, "And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. *The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, 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 individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.* But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (R. 21:15-27).

So the New Jerusalem is measured with a golden reed, normally 10 feet long, and a furlong or stadia is a little over 600 feet. Thus, the length, width and height of the city is around 1,500 miles!—a perfect cube similar to the Holy of Holies of the Temple, but immensely larger—bigger than half the size of the continental U.S.--but then it also is 1, 500 miles high!

*The Tyndale Commentary* notes, "A city this size is too large for the imagination to take in. John is certainly conveying the idea of splendor. And, more importantly, *that of room for all*" (p. 251). Christ wasn't kidding when He said, "There are many rooms in my Father's house. I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you" (John 14:2, CEV).

Then John describes the wall--the term can mean either 216 feet *thick* or *high*--and it is also made of

this crystal-like jasper, sparkling like a diamond. The city itself is made of translucent gold. There are also twelve jewels adorning the foundations of the city—each of those gems appear to be the same as those on the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20).

The twelve gates were made of pearls—thus the phrase "the pearly gates." The street was also made of translucent gold. John was surprised there wasn't a temple in city and then sees that "the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." Just as the Holy of Holies was lighted by the glory of God, so the New Jerusalem is bathed by the brilliance of God the Father and of the Lamb. Apparently, no sun or moon now exist for they are no longer needed.

Next are described its inhabitants—all the resurrected saints. They have different positions of rulership in the kingdom of God, as Rev. 5:10 says, "And [you] have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." Also Rev. 20:6 adds, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

Some might think there are still sinners present, but as *Expositor's* says, "This should not be taken as implying that in the New Jerusalem there will still be unsaved [sinners] roaming around outside the city...Instead, the exhortation warns present readers that the only way to participate in the future city is to turn one's total loyalties to the Lamb now." So the unrepentant have already been judged, condemned and cast in the fiery lake, suffering the second death.

Consequently, everyone has had an opportunity for salvation and to be in the Lamb's Book of Life--but God can't force a person to obey Him or to accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice for their own sins. So God's judgment will have been loving, merciful, and fair--only the incorrigibly wicked will not enter this city!