

94. Metropolis of the Kingdom

What happy task was committed to one of the seven vial angels?

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Revelation 21:9.

The first time this vial angel came to the prophet it was to conduct him "into the wilderness" to see the "great whore." Revelation 17:1,3. Now the far happier task devolves upon him of showing to John "the bride," "the Lamb's wife," or the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 21:9.)

As previously mentioned, the figure of marriage is used in the Scriptures to express two spiritual relationships. First, it represents the union of Christ with Israel and with the church. (2 Corinthians 11:2) Secondly, it is used to represent the induction of Christ into His capital and His kingdom. In this latter union, the New Jerusalem is the "bride" and, when the marriage has been celebrated, "the Lamb's wife."

The New Jerusalem is the "city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God," which Abraham saw by faith. (Hebrews 11:10,16) It is the city of which prophets, apostles, and martyrs have dreamed (Hebrews 13:14), and which God promised to prepare for their reception. (Hebrews 11:16)

Fleshly Israel, in their sinful conceit, imagined that it was the Zion they knew, but Paul told them plainly that the earthly Jerusalem was "in bondage with her children" (Galatians 4:25), and that the city to which the prophets referred was "Jerusalem which is above." Verse 26.

From what vantage point was John shown the New Jerusalem?

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Revelation 21:10.

To see the great harlot, John was carried "into the wilderness." To view "the bride," the "Lamb's wife," he is taken into a "great and high mountain." (Compare Ezekiel 40:2) From thence he saw the heavenly city descending to its prepared site as the stately metropolis of the renewed earth. (Zechariah 14:4)

How glorious did the city appear?

"Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Revelation 21: 11.

While a figure of speech is used to portray the union of Christ with His kingdom, the "bride" herself is no figure, but as real as the recreated earth, of which it is to be the capital forever.

The glory of God rested for but a brief period upon the old Jerusalem, and the time came, as a result of Israel's unfaithfulness, when there was written across it, "Ichabod ... the glory is departed." 1 Sam. 4:21. From the New Jerusalem, however, the glory of the presence of God, like gleaming crystal and jasper, will never depart.

By what is the city surrounded?

"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates. On the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates!" Revelation 21:12, 13.

Twelve is the number of governmental perfection; the twelve gates, therefore, indicate the perfect order and organization of the metropolis.

The twelve tribes whose names are inscribed upon the gates of the city are not the tribes of fleshly Israel, but of spiritual Israel, comprehending all the nations of the saved. As Paul explains in his epistle to the Romans: "They are not all [spiritual] Israel, which are of [fleshly] Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." Romans 9:6,7. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart." Romans 2:28,29. "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29.

In one or other of the tribes, according to their experience, the faithful 144,000 who endure the final wrath of the great apostasy will be enrolled. (Revelation 7: 4-8.) And so also will all the vast company of the saved when they come up in the first resurrection.

On what is the wall of the city founded?

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Revelation 21:14.

As the walls are pierced by twelve gates, so they are built upon twelve superimposed foundations. The names of the twelve apostles on these provide further proof that the tribes are not the tribes of ancient Israel, but the new tribes of spiritual Israel.

What are the dimensions of the city?

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Revelation 21: 15, 16.

It is not clear whether this measurement refers to the circuit of the city or to each side of the vast square. As, however, Ezekiel's vision-city measured 4,500 furlongs on each side (Ezekiel 48:16) and 18,000 furlongs "round about" (verse 35), the New Jerusalem could hardly be smaller. It would seem, therefore, that it will be 12,000 furlongs or 1,500 miles along each side, or 6,000 miles in circuit.

The "equality" of the length, breadth, and height of the city does not mean that it will be as high as it is long and wide, but that the city will be "proportionate" in its dimensions. That is to say, the vertical elevation of the city will be in harmony with its vast surface area.

As the earthly Zion was upon the tops of the mountains of Judah it would seem that the heavenly Zion will itself have the appearance of a great and high mountain, with the glorious throne of God crowning the summit. This would fit in with the expressions commonly used of it, "Mount Zion" and the "Mount of the Lord!" It also makes it very easy to understand how Satan's host approaching the city will suddenly find themselves in the full glory of the great white throne.

How high is the wall of the city?

"And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." Revelation 21: 17.

This represents a height of some 216-266 feet, a massive enough structure to one standing at its base, but not high enough to obscure the rising terraces of the city leading up to the throne of God.

Of what materials are the wall and the city constructed?

"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." Revelation 21:18.

Jasper was probably the ancient name for diamond. A golden city set in a diamond frame will surely be a sight of surpassing loveliness.

With what are the foundations of the city garnished?

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." Revelation 21:19, 20.

It is difficult precisely to picture the colors by reason of the fact that the ancient names do not correspond exactly with those of modern stones. But they would seem to produce a kind of double rainbow with the reds of sardonyx, or onyx, and sardine stone, or sardius, in the center, merging above and below into yellows (chrysolite, topaz), greens (emerald, beryl, and chrysoprasus or aquamarine), and blues (chalcedony, sapphire, jacinth, and amethyst). The base of the wall is transparent jasper or diamond, like the material used for the main structure of the wall above.

Of what material are the gates constructed?

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl." Revelation 21:21.

Wonderful will be the iridescent glory of the pearly gates as they swing back to admit the nations of the saved.

Of what is the street of the city made?

"And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Revelation 21:21.

This may mean that the material of which all the streets of the city are made will be transparent gold. A more likely explanation of the word *plateia*, however, is that it is a vast central square in the heart of the city before the throne. Wonderful beyond imagination will be the reflection of the throne and of the buildings of the city in that glorious expanse.

What seemed to be missing from the city, and why?

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Revelation 21:22.

Dominating the ancient city of Jerusalem were the gleaming temple buildings, but in the New Jerusalem John saw no such structure, for the whole dry will be a temple and the throne of God and of the Lamb the holy of holies of it. All its inhabitants will be priests and worship will be ceaseless before the throne.

By what will the city be illuminated?

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light." Revelation 22:5. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Revelation 21:23. "There shall be no night there." Revelation 21:25.

Time will still be divided into days and nights, weeks and months, in the new earth, otherwise it would be impossible for the nations of the saved "from one Sabbath to another" and "from one new moon to another" to come up to worship in the city. But, as Isaiah explains, "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days" (Isaiah 30:26), so that there will be no night as we commonly understand the expression. The city will continually be bathed in the shekinah glory from the throne.

Who will be privileged to dwell in this wonderful city?

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day.... And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." Revelation 21:24-26.

The kingdom of God will be divided among the "nations" or "tribes" of the saved, over whom there will be subordinate rulers appointed in token of their service in the cause of God on the earth. These rulers will be called on special occasions to councils in the city, while Sabbath by Sabbath and from month to month the saints will throng thither to worship before the throne.

Who, on the other hand, will be excluded from the New Jerusalem?

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie. But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:27.

The list of those shut out from the glories of the kingdom again includes those who have partaken in the idolatries of Antichrist and those who have had a part in perpetuating Satan's "lie." Only those whose names are retained in the book of life will be there.

What will be among the most conspicuous features of the city of God?

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:1, 2.

Proceeding from the throne of God, the river of life will flow across the great central square, if that is the meaning of the *plateia* or "street." This is the "living water" which Jesus promised to all who believe in Him (John 4:10; 7:38), and the "river of Thy pleasures" to which the psalmist looked forward with such anticipation. (Psalm 36:8)

Arching over the river from both sides will rise the luxuriant tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits. From its description we are not to understand that it will bear twelve different kinds of fruit. There will only be one kind, but there will be new fruit upon the tree every month. As the nations of the saved come up to the city month by month, doubtless each new crop of fruit will be awaiting their delectation.

The statement that the leaves will be for the "healing" of the nations should more correctly be rendered for the "service" of the nations, for none will be ill nor have need of healing in that wonderful

world. (Isaiah 33: 24)

From what will the earth be completely delivered?

"And there shall be no more curse." Rev 22:1

All the effects of sin will have been removed from the natural world, and all its marks upon the character and life of men will have gone. The consequences of the curse that fell upon Eden will be completely eliminated in Eden restored.

What will stand in the midst of the city?

"But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and as servants shall serve Him." Revelation 22:1

Occupying the most central and the most elevated place in the city will be the throne of God and of the Lamb, with an open space stretching out in front of it for the reception of the vast throngs who will come periodically to worship before the Lord.

What will be the chief joy of the redeemed?

"And they shall see His face." Revelation 22:4.

Chief of all the joys of the new world will be that of open communion with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ. To see His face, the fairest of ten thousand, to hear the melody of His voice as the "sound of many waters," to sit at His feet and listen to the wonderful words of life which come from His lips will indeed be "fullness of joy." Psalm 16: 11.

What will eternally indicate the allegiance of the saints?

"And His name shall be in their foreheads." Revelation 22:4.

Indicative of their "right" to enter the gates of the city and partake of the tree of life and the water of life, will be the Father's name in their foreheads.

How long will the reign of the saints in the renewed earth be?

"And they shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 22:5.

Then will the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples, and which has been continually upon the lips of the people of God ever since, "Thy kingdom come," be fully answered. (Matthew 6: 10)

Released from the trammels of the reign of sin, the renewed mind of man will revel in divine arts and sciences, and the discoveries of our time will be as nothing to man's exhilarating quest in the world to come.

Not even the most vivid imagination can picture the delights of the reunited family of God as they live and learn, worship and praise, through the eternal years. (1 Corinthians 2: 9)