

God's Eternal Plan #35
The Heavenly Jerusalem
Revelation 21:9-27

In Revelation 21 and 22 the apostle John gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be like. It is impossible to fully comprehend a realm, which we have never seen and it is difficult to translate heaven into earthly terms so we can understand. The glory of God's presence is so far beyond man's comprehension that when John tried to describe what was revealed to him, he had to describe it in terms of reflected sunlight and gleaming gems and glittering gold that had been polished to mirror brilliance. **Ezekiel faced this same problem.** In the first chapter of his prophecy the glory of God was revealed to him, and the dazzling brilliance of the Shekinah of God burst over him. As he sought to describe what he saw, he could only describe it in terms of the sun shining as polished jewels. **In Revelation 1, when the apostle John was given a revelation of the glory of the resurrected, glorified Christ, he spoke of the glory of that person in terms of sunlight shining on new-fallen snow.** Therefore, when the Word of God attempts to describe the brilliance of the glory of God it uses terms that are most familiar to our vocabulary.

With that thought in mind, in this study, we are going to talk about what heaven will be like.

First of all, heaven in its truest sense is the presence of God. That does not mean that heaven is not a literal place, because it certainly is; but heaven is more than that, and when we think of heaven we have to think of it first of all as the place of God's *revealed presence*, where He displays His *glory*. In Revelation 22:4, John wrote concerning the redeemed, "They shall see His face." In John 14:3, Christ shared this same truth this way, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." The apostle Paul had this to say in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus (verse 14 gives us the promise of where the dead in Christ are today). For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." **Now watch this – the Bible never refers to Christ coming to take us to heaven.** It always refers to Christ coming to take us to Himself or to take us home to the Father, to take us into the Father's house. The concept of heaven in the Word of God is the concept of

being in the presence of our blessed Savior! When we realize this is the concept of Scripture is make the question so often asked, “Where is heaven?” of little importance. Do not try to fix heaven. Heaven is the presence of God!

When Christ was in conflict with the Pharisees, as recorded in Luke 20, they came to Him in order to discredit Him with a question for which they felt had no legitimate answer. It was a puzzling question of the man who died whose brother took his widow and he died, and so on until all seven brothers had fulfilled the requirements of the Levitical law and had married their deceased brother’s wife. In verse 33 the question was asked, “In the resurrection which one of the brothers will claim her as his wife?” The Lord answered this way in verses 34-36, “Marriage is for people here on earth. But in the age to come, those worthy of being raised from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. And they will never die again. In this respect they will be like angels. They are children of God and children of the resurrection.” There are two or three things we need to comment on concerning this passage of Scripture.

First, Jesus is not saying that when we get to heaven we are all going to be angels. We know that angels were created “en mass,” that is all angels were created in one creative act. We also know that angels were created long before Adam and Eve (Lucifer was a fallen angel that we now know to be the devil).

Second, Jesus is simply reminding us that angel do not marry. The Scriptures indicate that all angels are male (Gabriel, Michael, etc.) therefore it would be obvious that angels do not marry. But, that does not mean that under certain conditions angels cannot cohabit and/or have sexual relations with women, as seen Genesis 6:1-4, “Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. The sons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives... In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.”

Third, Jesus is not speaking primarily of the angel’s physical appearance; He is speaking of their place of residence. In that sense, Jesus is saying as angels dwell in the presence of God so shall we.

Speaking of bodies, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:35-42, “But someone may ask, How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have? What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. Similarly there are different kinds of flesh - one kind for humans, another for

animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory. It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever.” **Paul is simply saying that in the Eternal State we will not be disembodied spirits floating around like a wisp of cloud.** Instead we will have bodies suited for heaven, and in these bodies we will be known as we are known here on the earth. In other words, when we get to heaven, I will be known as me and you will be known as you.

Revelation 21:2 says, “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” **In Genesis 12 God called Abraham to leave a pretentious, worldly city.** And the Word of God tells us that “By faith, Abraham, when he was called ... went out, not knowing where he went.” **Why did he do this strange thing?** The answer is found in Hebrews 11:10, “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God.”

We are told the city will descend from heaven. I am convinced the “holy city,” the “new Jerusalem,” will be suspended immediately above the earth Jerusalem. Men have scoffed at such an idea in the past, but they can afford to scoff no more. **Men themselves can now put satellites into stationary orbit over any part of the globe.** The New Jerusalem is brought by God from outer space and made to hover in stationary orbit over Jerusalem. Direct communication is opened up between heaven and earth, and there will be a continual relationship between the two Jerusalem’s. The miraculous element is present, but it is no longer the kind of thing at which men can scoff, nor is it to be regarded as science fiction.

John is impressed by the majesty of the heavenly city. In Revelation 21:11 he describes the city as “having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” **The New Jerusalem will shine in the sky with a luster of all its own.** Men will look up from the earth and see it there flashing in the sky like a giant diamond.

The wall of the heavenly city is made of pure jasper, and is 144 cubits thick. 144 cubits is equal to approximately 216 feet. I took the liberty of calling the State Road Department and ask the measurement of the Interstate Highway system, and found out that each lane measured 12 feet. That means that the wall of the “new Jerusalem” is wide enough to have an 18 lane Interstate Highway all the way around it!

But the most staggering sight will be the size of this great golden city, as seen in verse 16, "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." **12,000 furlongs is equal to 1,500 miles.** This wall of jasper represents Christ, in His radiant glory, surrounding His wife with love and protection!

We are also told that "the city is laid out as a square" and "its length is as great as the breadth." **These dimensions can describe a pyramid, but it seems more likely that the holy city is a perfect cube, just as the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple were cubes.** The city runs 12,000 furlongs in all directions: it is 1,500 miles square and high. These dimensions have puzzled past expositors, but a city this size is no longer inconceivable, especially when it is regarded as a heavendescended satellite. The God who can orbit a moon around a planet or a family of planets around the sun can easily design a cubical satellite, create it, and then launch it into its desired orbit relative to earth.

Now, if this city were to be placed down in the United States, it would reach from the tip of Maine to the tip of Florida, and from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to Denver, Colorado. In other words it would occupy more than onehalf of the United States. **But it would also reach 1,500 miles high.** To give you an idea of how high 1,500 miles is, let me tell you that when John Glenn became America's first astronaut, the spaceship that he was flying only went to a full height of 162 miles high.

Every gate will be made from one great pearl and the street will be transparent gold. In other words, no one can enter or depart from the city without being reminded that the "Pearl of Great Price" who is Jesus Himself paid for the price of our admission into the city. And as we look down at the street on which we walk we will be made aware of the righteousness that is ours through the finished work of Christ.

Revelation 21:11-14, 17-21 gives us this description of our heavenly home, "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... 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.”

Let me close this study of the “heavenly Jerusalem” by once more reminding you the effects of the curse will be removed, as seen in verse 4, “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.” **In our new home death will be a thing of the past.** There will be no more funerals, no more graves, no more hospitals, no more broken homes, no more broken hearts. What a day of rejoicing that will be.