

## Session 26      **The New Jerusalem - Like a Bride**      Revelation 21:9-22:5

**The Bride, the Lamb's Wife, v9. There is an obvious contrast with the harlot Babylon** - the same pattern of language is used as in 17:1. The bride, v2, has become His wife - the romance of the ages has been consummated; God, in the Person of the Messiah, has restored intimacy between the Creator and the creature, sons of God, v7, and wife of His Son.

**Isaiah 62 is particularly related to this vision - Zion as a city and as a people and a bride.**

**The Holy City, Jerusalem, is also contrasted with the corrupt city, Babylon, v10-21, c.f. 17:3-6.**

- **Babylon's origin is the world, 17:1, 18, and it was energized from below, 17:8.**  
The vantage point for Babylon is the wilderness, where the saints were persecuted, 12:6, 13-17, 17:6.  
The woman was arrayed and adorned in a parody of the true Bride, 17:4  
The precious stones and pearls and gold are a corrupt parody of the Holy City, 17:4-5, c.f. Ezek.28:11-15, (the king of Tyre as a metaphor for satan and his corrupt kingdom, Babylon).
- **New Jerusalem descends out of Heaven from God, 21:10.**  
The vantage point is now it is a great and high mountain, 21:10, like the place where the Lamb stood with His loyal followers, 14:1-5.  
The woman is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, 21:2.  
The city of pearls and precious stones and gold is a holy place, 21:10-21

From one point of view the holy city is "**like a bride ...**", v2, but it **is both a bride and a city**.  
**As a city it is both the people of God and also the place where they live; The New Heaven and the New Earth come together as the New Jerusalem.** The metaphors/symbols are both complex and wonderful.

**A place of light and glory, v11.**

**The city descends from God but He also dwells in it, v3.**

**This is the reason for and the source of the light and glory, v23, c.f. Gen. 1:3, John 1:4, 9, 2Cor 4:6, Heb. 1:1-3.**

**Glory is the radiance of God's presence, portrayed in 4:2-3. "Jasper" is probably more like a diamond, a symbol of the "lamp" or "light-bearer" Who is the source of the light, John 1:5, 8:12.** The glory was seen from time to time, in specific locations, Exodus 34:29-35, 40:34-35, 2Chron. 7:1-3, Ezek. 1:26-28, , 14, Luke 9:28-29, 34-35, 2Peter 1:16-18. **It is now revealed fully and forever, the ultimate fulfilment of ancient prophecies, e.g. Isaiah 60:1-2, Hab. 2:14, Luke 1:76-79, 2:29-32.**  
**The city itself is saturated by the glory of God - she shares in it , as part of her nature, completing the process begun on earth through our union with Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, 2Cor. 3:17-18, 4:6, 16-18, 1John 3:1-3.**

**It is made of pure gold, v18b, 21.** The churches were described as **seven golden lampstands, 1:20, 2:1,** but at that stage they did not fully correspond to the description and, like Israel in the exile, were eventually removed from their places. Now, at last, **the church has come to its appointed destiny in the heavenly city, just as all Israel will one day be saved, Rom. 11:25-27. The refining process, in life, Job 23:8-10, 2Cor. 4:16-18, 1Peter 1:3-9, 3:3-4, Rev. 3:18, and the judgement seat of the Messiah, 1Cor. 3:10-15, 2Cor. 5:9-10, Rev. 20:12, have removed all the dross and consumed all that was worthless in the character of the people of God.**

**The gold is clear like glass; its radiance and glory are reflections of the glory of God as we live in union with Him, v11.** The prayer of Jesus in John 17 finds its ultimate and perfect fulfilment, v20-26.

**The symbolic structure, v12-21.**

Remember that this is a vision, symbolically portraying a reality rather than giving a literal architecture. The closest parallel in the Scriptures is Ezekiel's vision of an idealized temple, chapters 40-42, culminating

in the coming of the glory of God, 43:1-5. There are repeated references to measurements made with a rod - God's precise design and ownership.

In Rev. 11:1-2 the temple and the worshippers were measured - belonging to God and under His sovereign protection.

**Ezekiel's temple was foursquare, 45:2. The holy city is a perfect cube - like the Holy of Holies, 1Kings 6:20.**

- **Dimensions**, v16. 12,000 stadia is approx. 1,500 miles (1stadium = approx. 200 yards), from Spain to the Euphrates, the extent of the Roman Empire. 12,000 obviously a symbolic number, as in the 12x12,000 in 7:4-8, symbolizing the followers of the Lamb, c.f. 14:1-5. The total length of all the straight edges of the cube is also 12x12,000 (stadia). The height, length, and breadth encompass a vast volume, reflecting the huge worshipping congregation in 5:11 and 7:9.

- **The Wall with its foundations and gates** v12-21

- **Wall.** Since the city is a perfect cube and the wall is stated to be "great and high", v12, the height must also be 12,000 stadia, and 144 cubits, v17, must be its thickness. A human cubit, v17, is the length of the forearm (about 18 inches) so the wall would be impossibly thin for its height. Again we need to think in symbols, 12x12, c.f. 7:4-8; the city is a place and also a people.

**The wall is made of pure jasper, (diamond, clear as crystal)** v18a, transmitting the light of the city, v11. The wall does not function as protection, for there are no enemies or threats to security, v25. It simply marks the boundaries; otherwise a city could not actually exist (like a river without banks). Remember, this is a vision portraying a reality that is beyond our experience or capacity to imagine or describe.

- **Foundations**, v14, 19-20. **Jesus is the ultimate foundation - the chief cornerstone**, Eph. 2:20, Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22/1Pet. 2:6-7, 1Cor. 3:11, but in a secondary sense this is also true of the apostles, Eph. 2:20.

**There are twelve foundations, inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** Once again we are in the realm of symbolic numbers; Jesus was seen by the twelve, ignoring the absence of Judas, 1Cor. 15:5, and by Paul after Matthias had replaced Judas, Acts 1:26. James, brother of Jesus, was a leading apostle, as were Andronicus and Junia, Rom. 16:7. Barnabas is not stated to be an apostle but appears to have functioned as such.

**Apostles were directly appointed by Jesus from among His disciples**, Luke 6:13, Acts 9:15-16. Their preaching and miracles **brought the church into existence and they laid the foundation of witness and teaching to be followed** for the remainder of the church age, Matt. 28:16-20, Acts 2:14-43, 1Cor.3:9-11, Eph.4:11-16.

**Their lives set a pattern to be followed by leaders and also other believers**, 1Cor.4:9-16.

**We need to pay attention to this at a time when church leaders reinterpret Scripture according to the spirit of the age**, Jude v3-4. "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Psalm 11:3.

**The foundations are named for the apostles and are also adorned with precious stones**, v19-20, c.f. v2, Isaiah 54:11-14. The Greek suggests that the jewels are not merely attached to the stones but that the stones actually consist of the jewels. Allowing for uncertainties in the exact meaning for some of the stones, they appear to correspond to the jewels on the breastplate of the High Priest in Exodus 28:17-20 and 39:8-13, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, 39:14, carried close to his heart.

**The wall and the foundations form a unity - built of living stones**, Eph.2:19-22, 1Pet. 2:4-5, and in the complex set of metaphors also functioning as a holy priesthood, as symbolized by the OT High Priest.

**Eph. 2/1Pet. 2 describe a building/temple; this is now expanded to become a vast city** that is the dwelling place of God. His presence in the city (His people as well as the place) is itself the Temple, the centre of worship, v22.

- **Gates**, v12-13, 21. **The twelve gates are named for the twelve tribes of the children of Israel**, c.f. Ezekiel 48:30-35. Twelve gates parallels twelve foundations, encompassing the whole of salvation history - the story of Israel as God's chosen pathway and the church resting on the foundation of apostolic teaching and practice. The significance of Israel as a people persists to the conclusion of

biblical revelation. The New Testament is not a new story, marking the failure of the old one, but is rather its continuation and completion, with nothing cancelled or lost. **Isaiah 60 is the prophetic background, see v11. This chapter is an example of multiple application with increasing levels of reality - return from exile, Messianic kingdom, ultimate expression in New Jerusalem.**

**The angels at the gates remind us that, although the gates are always open, access is restricted.**

The invitation is extended to all, 22:17 but with conditions attached, v27, c.f. 22:11.

**Verses 24-26 have been interpreted as indicating "Universalism",** i.e. that all will eventually be saved. Some ancient texts include the words in brackets here, "The nations (of those who are saved) will walk in its light", v24. The whole context of Revelation agrees with this text, not least the immediate one in v 27, re-emphasized in 22:11 and 15. Previous visions in 5:9-10 and 7:9-10 portrayed the redeemed from the nations worshipping before the throne. The angel evangelist in 14:6-7 calls on the nations to repent before the impending final judgement. At that judgement all will appear before God and every knee will bow to Jesus as Lord, Phil. 2:9-11, c.f. Rev. 15:3-4

**Revelation has an important evangelistic thrust with a repeated call to respond to the message within time, alongside the vision of the future and completed eternal state where destiny has been sealed forever.**

**Inside the city, 21:22-22:5.**

- **Temple, v22.** The whole city is now the Holy of Holies. There is no further need for a place or structure in which to mediate worship of God. God Himself, given His fullest description "The Lord God Almighty", and the Lamb are so immediately and tangibly present that all secondary or intermediate devices have become redundant, 22:4, 1John 3:3. They are the temple, the centre and focus of worship, c.f. 4: God is in the midst of His people, (the city in Rev.21 symbolizing both place and people) with nothing between. **Eden is restored**, Gen. 3:8, and fulfilled beyond imagination. Ezekiel's visions end with **the name of the New city - "The LORD is there"** 48:35.
- **Illumination, v23 -24, 22:5.** Isaiah's prophecy forms the background, 60:19-20 - restored Zion, 60:1-3 ff.

**The Shekinah was the only light in the Holy of Holies;** this prophetic picture is now a total reality. **Light preceded the creation of the sun and moon**, Gen.3:3,14-17. The sun and moon are called **the greater lamp and the lesser lamp. They functioned in a number of ways** - to divide the day from the night and to rule the day and the night; for signs and seasons, for days and years; and to give light on the earth. **None of these conditions now exists. "The city had no need ..."**, Rev. 21:23, 25b, 22:5. **The condition of Sabbath has been restored**, Gen. 2:2-3.

**The sun and moon and stars had become alternative objects of worship, controlling the lives of human creatures**, Psalm 121:6-7. Deut. 4:19, Ezek. 8:15-18. All of that is now in the past, **"The LORD God gives the light", "The Lamb is its lamp"**.

**God chose to connect the continued existence of the sun and the moon to the continuing existence of the nation of Israel, Jer. 31:35-37, and of His covenant with David, Psalm 89:30-37; the moon acts as the faithful witness to this fact, v37, c.f. Rev. 1:5. The redundancy of created light signals the conclusion of Israel's separate role and position in the purposes of God. Then, and only then, will this happen; all distinctions between Jew and Gentile will finally cease and the complete unity of the people of God will be revealed.**

- **The Throne, 22:1, 3. There is only one - It is the throne of God and of the Lamb, 3:21, 5:6, 7:17, c.f. Heb. 8:1, 12:2.** It is a throne of glory, from which flow life and order.