

## Lesson # 75 Revelation 21:21b-27

## Inside the City

Date: September 29, 2013

<sup>21</sup> ....*the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.*

<sup>22</sup> *And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.*

<sup>23</sup> *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

## I. Streets of Gold

## v. 21b

Have you noticed that the things we count most precious here on earth, things that wars have been fought over, that families have split over, that criminals have killed for, are used as construction and paving elements in heaven? The first half of v. 21 ended John's review of the outward appearance of the city as well as the river and trees, and now in this section, he describes the streets of The New Jerusalem.

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Note that the word is 'street' not 'streets', which means John is referring to "*the city's thoroughfare, city market or multiple streets*". The word for street in the Greek means 'broad' but its use here attaches 'way' to it automatically. It is a generic term in this context, pointing out what all streets in this city are constructed of – pure, translucent gold. No cement, no asphalt or dirt; no 'under construction signs'. This gold is so pure that it something we've never seen – translucent or transparent. Otherwise, the light emanating from within the city would be trapped inside.

We've seen heavenly transparent pavement before this haven't we? Remember **Rev. 4:2-6a; Ezek. 1:22; Ex. 24:9-10**. Once God's glory is on display, revealing Him as light, in whom there is no darkness, it would do no conceivable good to close that glory behind rock, or dense jewels. This glory is meant to be on display! Note Jesus' prayer in JN 17:24 – "*Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*" Judgment is completed forever and all who remain are with God in person and can now bask forever in the glow of that spectacular brilliance that Peter, James and John only caught a glimpse of on the Mount of Transfiguration in **MT. 17:2,5**. And we won't need sunblock, sunglasses or a hat!

## II. The Light of the Glory of God & the Lamb vv. 22-23

Since God is now among His people, with no sin to create a barrier or mar the fellowship, there is no longer a need for a temple, and so there is no temple within the city or anywhere else. All of life will be endless worship wherever we are because we are always in His presence. There is no need for a church, chapel, cathedral or any other place we gather on earth today to worship God.

John says that God & the Lamb are the temple here. What does he mean by that? God will make Himself fully available to all in that city – the fulfillment of the promise of the ages. We will be with God and Christ, with full access.

And ( v. 23 ) the light emanating from within that city will make sun and moon unnecessary and inferior if they exist at all in this new earth and heavens. The light is the glory of God, and the lamp is the Lamb. This new order of creation will be far different from the one we know. Now, we are dependent on the sun for heat, light, day, night and growing crops. The moon controls the tides and lights up the night sky, but with no sea, there will be no tides, and with no night, no need of the moon. Does that mean there will not be a sun and moon? Well, it says “no need” of them, not that they won’t exist, so maybe they will be there, but not for the purposes they now have.

J.A. Seiss, an Plymouth Brethren commentator ( 1823 – 1904 )lays out a good explanation of this glory light; *“And that shining is not from any material combustion, - not from any consumption of fuel which that needs to be replaced as one supply burns out; for it is the uncreated light of Him who is light, dispensed by and through the Lamb as the everlasting Lamp to the home, and hearts, and understandings of His glorified saints...Isaiah says, “the moon shall be ashamed and sun confounded,” – ashamed because of the out-beaming glory which then shall appear in the New Jerusalem, leaving no more need for them to shine in it, since the glory of God lights it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”*<sup>ii</sup> ②

Although Christ is called the lamp ( of the Lamb ), the glory of both ( and the Holy Spirit, though unmentioned ) is the source of this glorious light. Note Heb. 1:3 – *“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.”* The Godhead shares the authority and glory of eternity

## III. Eternal Daytime

vv. 24-26

It is a bit surprising to find out that there will be nations in heaven. These verses squash the idea that “no more sea” in 21:1 means no more nations in symbolism, because here they are.

The light from this city will emanate outward to the nations, “they will walk by it”, and “their kings will bring their glory into it.” So there will be nations who ( apparently ) will have access to this celestial city and in some sense, their

kings bring their glory into the city<sup>iii</sup>. Since only God has intrinsic glory, the glory these kings bring with them into the city must be imputed glory – a righteousness not originally their own, but now reflected in their glorified state, righteous and glorified in experience not just in declaration. As they come to worship God, they cast their glory to Him.

Remember that we, as believers, are co-heirs, part of the family of God, sons and daughters and it is heaven that the greatest and most obvious benefit of this fact will be revealed & on display. If there are kings, then there will be some sort of societal ranking system which is not really explained in any detail, but must exist if kings represent nations in heaven. Is this perhaps in part a result of the variance of rewards in heaven as spoken of in I Cor. 3:14-15?

The city gates – those 12 magnificent, gigantic pearls – will never be shut by day and although ancient cities always shut their gates by night ( cf. Josh. 2:5 ), these pearly gates will never close because there is no more night, and no one who would try to get in for nefarious reasons. These open gates also imply of course, that those within the city have the freedom to come and go as they please. Eternal day is spoken of because the light source is not an orbital sun or the reflective moon shining on a revolving planet, but God Himself from within the city.

“They” in v. 26 refers to the kings again, and is somewhat repetitive – they will bring the glory and honour of the nations into the city. **Isa. 60:11,19-22** talk about these things in a chapter mostly concerned with the Millennium, but these verses seem to be looking past that and into heaven. ③

#### IV. Who May Enter?

v. 27

Ps. 24:3 asks the question, “*Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place?*” Then v. 4 answers it, “*He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.*” **Rev. 21:27** also answers this question but from a more eternal perspective. What John has been describing in chapter 21 is a state of eternal glory for all believers in Christ. He has shown us about all he observed as the angel revealed all these marvelous sights, from the amazing fact of God’s dwelling with us, to the eradication of all sin, sorrow, evil and death. Night is gone, no mourning or tears and this 1,400 square mile jewel, our capital city forever, where our citizenship already is registered – cf. **Eph. 2:19-20** – pure gold, precious jewels, pearls, but no temple. It is all lit gloriously by God and the Lamb, so there is no need for sun or moon.

There are many things we would love to know about heaven, since that is where our citizenship is and our true loyalties lie, and we long to be there one day, but the Bible is silent about the details. The questions we have are some of these:

- Is heaven really timeless or will there be some form of time there? If so, how would that work?

- Since there is no more sin, will we have free will in heaven?
- Will we work in heaven?
- Will there be eating and drinking ( other than the water of life ) in heaven?
- Will there be sports and entertainment?
- What apparent age will we all be?
- Will we age in heaven?
- Will we learn, explore, fly, transport, have telepathy?
- Will we work in heaven?
- Will we need to sleep?
- Will there be animals in heaven? What about our beloved pets?
- What will relationships be like in heaven?
- Will we remember life on earth and the people we loved who are not in heaven with us?
- How much time will we be able to spend with Jesus?

In answer to the question above regarding the inability to sin in heaven, here is what Paul Helm says, *“The freedom of heaven, then, is the freedom from sin; not that the believer just happens to be free from sin, but that he is so constituted or reconstituted that he cannot sin. He doesn’t want to sin, and he does not want to want to sin.”*<sup>iv</sup>

These questions and hundreds of others are simply not answered in the Bible. There is a verse in **I Cor. 2:9** ( see also **Ps. 31:19 & Isa. 64:4; 65:17** ) that is often used to capture why there are no answers to these questions. Even though, in context, this verse is not referring to heaven, I would like to believe that there is a hint of heaven in this verse. ④

The question the Bible does answer is; for whom is this eternal bliss reserved? Even within chapter 21 ( v. 8 ) the question is answered in the negative form, and here in v. 27 positively, and in 22:3a & v. 15 another group eligible for heaven is listed. Heaven is exclusive – only those who love God and believe on Jesus Christ for their salvation will ever enter it or even see it.

Verse 27 is clear – nothing unclean, anyone who does detestable or false things will ever enter. Those who are this will have been judged and condemned at the GWTJ ( 20:11-15 ). All of us who do enter should be very aware of verses like **I Cor. 6:9-11** because it is not because we are better than any other people that we can anticipate heavenly glory, but because our Saviour has done it all for us, His elect!

The positive statement in v. 27 is a reminder of our election by God. The only people who enter heaven are those whose names were written in the Lamb’s book of life. When were our names written there? In Rev. 13:8; 17:8, we are told that the names of the elect were written down BFTFOTW! We have already examined those verses in detail & discussed the doctrinal aspects of this truth so we won’t do that here. However, is it not an incredible promise keeping God who promises whom He will save before He creates anything in Gen. 1ff, and then

through many millennia of toil, trouble, war, peace, sorrow, fear, grief, martyrdom, etc. brings exactly those people whose names were written down into glory as described in Revelation 21 – 22! Astounding & amazing grace! Not a single one of His elect are ever going to be lost. Rom. 8:29ff; John 10, etc. Eternal security means just that! This is the real contextual meaning of **II Peter 3:9**.

In heaven, we will never have to pause and consider, “should I go here or there?” or “should I be careful of this person or that one?”, because we will all be family, righteous, loving and gloriously saved by Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf.

I am going to let theologian, A.A. Hodge have the last word here, “*Heaven, as the eternal home of the divine Man and of all the redeemed members of the human race, must necessarily be thoroughly human on its structure, conditions, and activities. Its joys and activities must all be rational, moral, emotional, voluntary and active. There must be the exercise of all faculties, the gratification of all tastes, the development of all talent capacities, the realization of all ideals. The reason, the intellectual curiosity, the imagination, the aesthetic instincts, the holy affections, the social affinities, the inexhaustible resources of strength and power native to the human soul must all find in heaven exercise and satisfaction. There must always be a goal of endeavor before us, ever future....Heaven will prove the consummate flower and fruit of the whole creation and of all the history of the universe.*”<sup>v</sup>

Next lesson – Lesson # 76 -- Rev. 22:1-5 Life and Light

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<sup>i</sup> Robert Thomas, p. 473

<sup>ii</sup> J.A. Seiss, The Apocalypse, Zondervan, ND, p. 499.

<sup>iii</sup> It makes one wonder at this reference to kings, which implies nations. What do these kings and nations do when they are not in the New Jerusalem?

<sup>iv</sup> Paul Helm, as quoted by Randy Alcorn in “Heaven”, Tyndale, 2004, p. 301

<sup>v</sup> A.A. Hodge, as quoted by Randy Alcorn in Heaven, Tyndale, 2004, pp. 97-98