



THE REIGN OF CHRIST

The Vision of The Church In Eternity

October 22, 2017

Revelation 21:1 - 22:5

The New Heaven and the New Earth

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." **6** And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. **7** The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. **8** But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

The New Jerusalem

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." **10** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, **11** having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. **12** It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— **13** on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. **14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. 18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 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. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 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.

The River of Life

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

1. From the fate of the evil John turns to that of the good. He tells us that he *saw a new heaven and a new earth* (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13). For *new* see note on 5:9; “new in kind” not just “another” (Sweet). John is describing a complete transformation of all things, but he uses the language of heaven and earth for he has no other language. And he expressly differentiates the new from the present heaven and earth. He is not looking for a new edition of the same thing. We can understand *the first earth* passing away, but it is curious that *the first heaven* is also marked for dissolution. The point may be that in heaven, as so far described, there are symbols of God’s separateness, like the ‘sea of glass’ (4:6). But the final state of affairs will be characterized by God’s nearness.

From this John goes on to say that there will be *no longer any sea*. The sea is never still, a symbol of changefulness. And it is the source of evil, for the beast comes up from it (13:1). ‘The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud’

(Isa. 57:20). We must moreover bear in mind that in antiquity people did not have the means of coping successfully with the sea's dangers and they regarded it as an unnatural element, a place of storms and danger. 'For this element of unrest, this fruitful cause of destruction and death, this divider of nations and Churches, there could be no place in a world of social intercourse, deathless life, and unbroken peace' (Swete). In the end this seething cauldron, fraught with unlimited possibilities of evil, will disappear. No-one lives on the sea. It is something to be crossed to arrive at one's destination, but there is nothing permanent about it. The sea is one of seven evils John speaks of as being no more, the others being death, mourning, weeping, pain (v. 4), curse (22:3) and night (22:5).

2. John saw *the Holy City, the new Jerusalem*. The adjectives *new* and *holy* point to characteristics distinguishing it from the present world, whereas *Jerusalem* rather points to continuity. Great events took place in or near Jerusalem, and specifically our redemption was wrought there.

That the new city came *out of heaven from God* is natural enough for the new order, but that it came to earth is somewhat puzzling, as is the fact that John envisages a new earth at all. Certainly he is not thinking of the new earth as the place of people's felicity, in distinction from the new heaven as God's dwelling-place, for God's dwelling 'is with men' (v. 3). In fact after the new Jerusalem descends there appears to be no difference between heaven and earth. Perhaps John has in mind that there is already a sense in which God's people experience the heavenly city. It is this that is their bliss in the presence of a multitude of earthly distractions and difficulties. And this of which they now experience a foretaste (and which is expressed in the idea of *Jerusalem*) will be perfectly realized hereafter. Heaven will, so to speak, come down to earth. John saw the city *beautifully dressed for her husband* (cf. Isa. 61:10). A young lady is apt to be thoroughly prepared and looking her best on the day of her wedding. So with those who constitute 'the bride' of Christ.

3. Once again John hears a *voice* but does not identify it for us. This is the last of twenty occasions on which he speaks of a voice as 'a great (NIV *loud*) voice' (once also a 'strong' voice). The loudness of the voice and its origin (*from the throne*) are fitting for a voice with the tremendous announcement *the dwelling ('tabernacle') of God is with men*. The word 'tabernacle' cannot here signify a temporary dwelling ('tent'), for it refers to God's very presence (cf. Lev. 26:11; Ezek. 37:27). It is probably used because it recalls the Hebrew word we transliterate as *Shekinah*, 'dwelling', a term that denotes the glory of God's presence among us. John is conveying two thoughts, those of God's presence and of God's glory (which he reinforces with *he will live with them*). They will be his peoples (the better MSS have the plural); the redeemed will come from many nations (and be all one in Christ, Gal. 3:28). John adds *God himself will be with them*, the third time this thought has been expressed in this verse. He is *their God* (cf. Ezek. 36:28; Heb. 11:16). There is an intimate bond. In Ezekiel's vision the name of the city was given as 'THE LORD IS THERE' (Ezek. 48:35). John writes of the fulfilment of what the prophet saw.

4. None less than God will be the consoler of his people. *He will wipe away every tear.* His concern is infinite. John gives a little catalogue of evils which will cease to be. *Death* is first with a certain emphasis. Death has no final triumph and it is well that God's people see that ultimately it will cease to be. This is the reversal of the curse of Genesis 3 (cf. also 1 Cor. 15:54). So also sorrow and wailing and pain will cease. John sees a reason for this, namely 'the first things (NIV *the old order of things*)', the things pertaining to the first heaven and earth, will have been completely done away. Life as we know it is completely replaced by the new order. John had wept at the thought that there was no-one worthy to open the seals (5:4). Is there no answer to the problem of earth's evil? His visions have answered that question. The Lamb has conquered. Now he finds that tears, too, have gone for ever.

b. Separation between good and evil (21:5–8)

5. This is noteworthy as one of the very few occasions in Revelation on which God himself is said to speak (1:8, perhaps 16:1, 17). It is usually an angel or an unidentified voice (as in v. 3). John tells us now that God speaks, but he does not say to whom he speaks. It may be to the heavenly hosts, though it is not easy to see why they would need this saying. But certainly the words mean reassurance for the little church of John's day. Its persecuted and threatened members needed these words of hope. *I am making everything new* (cf. Isa. 65:17) of course refers primarily to the final renewing at the End. But the present tense is used and it is worth reflecting that God continually makes things new here and now (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16–18; 5:16–17; Col. 3:1–4; etc.). *Then he said* is better than 'And he said' and is probably an interjection from another speaker (the Greek is *kai legei* which comes between two *kai eipen*). It may be that John was so astounded that he forgot to write and an angel reminded him, telling him that *these words* (presumably the words about to be spoken, though they may be the words about renewal) *are trustworthy and true*. They must be recorded.

6. It appears that we have the words of God again. *It is done* is really a plural, 'they are done'. This probably refers to all the events that had to take place. To troubled Christians the future seemed problematical. The firm word of God reassures them. He is in command and in the end all things work out just as he wills. *I am the Alpha and the Omega* (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) followed by *the Beginning and the End* (cf. 1:8; 22:13) reveals God as the Originator and Completer of all things. *I* is emphatic as the speaker moves on to the satisfying of man's deep spiritual need. The gift is made *to him who is thirsty*, and we may fairly conclude that unless anyone feels a need he will not seek satisfaction. When he does, the need is met *from the spring of the water of life* (cf. Isa. 55:1; John 4:10, 14). The adverb 'freely' (NIV *without cost*) emphasizes that God's gift is not grudging. The thirsty may rely on a full and free supply of their need.

7. *He who overcomes* takes us back to the messages to the seven churches (chs. 2 and 3). The victor is now assured that in the final triumph he *will inherit* all things. He will have no lack. Moreover God *will be his God* and he will be God's son (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). He will have a

special relationship to the supreme Ruler of all.

8. The reverse side of this is the evil fate that awaits sinners. John inserts a brief but serious warning. *The cowardly* head the list. In the circumstances in which John's readers found themselves, courage was very important, all the more so in that he is speaking now of final realities. To be cowardly before the enemies of God at the last is finally to lose the things of God. John is not speaking of natural timidity, but of that cowardice which in the last resort chooses self and safety before Christ, and fears the threats of the beast rather than trusts the love of Christ. God did not give his people such a spirit of cowardice (2 Tim. 1:7).

It is not unlikely that we should take *apistois* (*unbelieving*) in the sense 'not to be trusted', i.e. those who in the testing time have given way. It could, of course, mean those who lack all faith, but it seems that these are in mind throughout the list and are not to be located specially in any one term. The *vile* are not defined with precision. The term is a general one, covering defilement of various kinds. There is probably the idea that to accept ideas and practices from heathen religions is to be defiled (cf. 17:4–5).

Murderers will have a special reference to the persecutors, though, of course, all homicide is covered. The *sexually immoral* strictly are male prostitutes, but in the New Testament the word refers to sexual sin in general. Here there is possibly a reference to idol worship as well. This will also be the case with *those who practise magic arts*, which may contain a side glance at such practices as making the image of the beast to speak (13:15). We should not dismiss magic as of no concern to us as long as many who call themselves Christians persist in the use of good-luck charms and the like. Their attitude is that of those who practised magic of old. *Idolaters* had to be castigated in the ancient world and we do well in modern times to be on our guard against putting anything in the place of the one true God. Last are *all liars*, for truth is a quality earnestly to be sought. The place for all such sinners is *in the fiery lake of burning sulphur*. John has described this as 'the second death' (20:14), a description he now repeats.

c. The holy city (21:9–21)

The most considerable section of this chapter is given over to a description of the holy city. In a series of vivid metaphors John sets out important truths about the life to come.

9. *One of the ... angels who had the ... bowls full of the seven last plagues* comes on the scene again, but we are not told which one. *Come* (*deuro*) is a command, not an invitation. John is summoned. The angel says, *I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb*. The latter expression puts some emphasis on the final state. The marriage is now not something to be looked forward to but something that has arrived. *The Lamb* is very prominent in the new Jerusalem; he is mentioned in these last two chapters seven times.

We should not overlook the fact that the angel who shows John the bride is introduced

in exactly the same terms as the one who showed him the judgment of the whore (17:1). This can scarcely be accidental. John may even mean that it was the same one. He may want us to see, as Barclay suggests, that God's servants do not select their tasks; God may send them for judgment or for blessing or for both in turn. But they must go where they are sent; they must speak what God tells them to speak. Or John may have in mind that there is but one divine purpose: judgment and grace go together. It issues in the appearance of the bride of the Lamb, but this necessarily involves the judgment of the whore. It is impossible to dwell both in Babylon and the new Jerusalem. To choose Jerusalem is to renounce Babylon. Judgment on sin is the necessary prelude to the establishment of the city of God. Christina Rossetti sees it in this way: 'Hourly, momentarily, there come to me mercies or chastisements. The chastisements themselves are veiled mercies, as it were veiled angels. The mercies I name chastisements are no less merciful than those which at once I recognize as mercies.' Mercy and judgment are inextricably interwoven.

10. John was taken *in the Spirit* (see note on 1:10) *to a mountain*. This means that he saw a vision, not that he was transported bodily. It disclosed to him *Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven*. The description is very like that in verse 2 (where see note) though 'new' is omitted. Some find a difficulty in this second mention of the descent of *the Holy City*. But we need not think of two originally different narratives put together by a bungling editor, so obtuse that he forgot what he had included eight verses before. Nor need we think that the city was taken up to heaven in the meantime and is now brought down again. Rather as Caird puts it, "To the crack of doom Jerusalem can never appear other than "coming down out of heaven", for it owes its existence to the condescension of God and not to the building of men.' We should perhaps notice that whereas John was in a 'wilderness' when he saw great Babylon (17:3), it was from *a mountain great and high* that he saw the new Jerusalem. The heavenly city is to be discerned only from an exalted standpoint, perhaps the high point of faith.

11. The city had *the glory of God*. This is not elaborated, but it is surely the most striking thing about the city. John proceeds to tell us that *its brilliance was like that of ... precious stone*, further defined as *jasper* and *clear as crystal* (an expression here only in the New Testament). This might mean 'shining like crystal' or 'transparent like crystal'. Jasper as we know it is an opaque stone, which raises the question whether John means the same stone as we do. If it is crystal clear it is not our jasper, and some have thought that diamond is meant. There is often uncertainty about the identification of precious stones in antiquity (see note on 4:3). But whatever our view on the identity of this stone, it is quite clear that John thinks of the brilliance of the new Jerusalem as like very costly stone. And as this very costly stone was used earlier to convey the glory of God (4:3), its use here tells us that the city's brilliance comes from God himself.

12. The city was surrounded by *a great, high wall*, which means that it was secure and inviolable. It cannot be meant as a defence, for all enemies have been destroyed and in any case its gates are never shut (v. 25). The walls are pierced by *twelve gates*, over each of which is set an angel. This will be a mark of dignity, for an angelic gatekeeper is most

unusual. There may also be the thought that the angel controls who goes in and out. Entrance to God's city is not open to anyone who chooses, but only to those to whom God gives the right. The gates bear *the names of the twelve tribes of Israel* (cf. Ezek. 48:31–34). This heavenly city is the true fulfilment of Israel's high calling. The ancient people of God is not forgotten in the final disposition of things.

13. The location of the twelve *gates* is specified. It is natural that three face each point of the compass but the order in which they are mentioned, *east ... north ... south and ... west*, is a curious one. It is found in Ezekiel 42:16–19. Some think it was derived from that passage and even that the names on the gates are those in the prophet (Ezek. 48:31–34). Smith does this, and goes on to comment on the marvel that Dan, omitted from the list in chapter 7, is now on what he calls 'the "glory side" of the city'. But this is supposition. John does not mention Dan, and the twelve tribes in mind may well be those in chapter 7.

14. Under the wall were *twelve foundations*, bearing the *names* of Christ's *apostles*. The combination of the twelve tribes in verse 12 and the twelve apostles is a way of saying that Israel of old and the Christian church are united in God's final scheme of things. This truth has been brought out in various places in the concluding scenes. *The Lamb* (rather than the personal name) points to the character in which our salvation is accomplished.

15. *The angel ... had a measuring rod of gold.* The purpose (*hina*) was *to measure the city, its gates, and its wall*. Measuring evidently signifies security and protection (in 11:2 the outer court which was given over to the Gentiles was not measured).

16. *The city was ... square.* When the angel *measured* it up, the length, breadth and height were all *12,000 stadia*. The city is thus more than square: it is a perfect cube. This shape is that of the Holy of Holies. It is the place where God dwells. There will be the added thought that God's people dwell there too in perfect fellowship with God. The number 12,000 is the number of Israel, twelve, multiplied by the cube of ten, the number of completion. It thus stands for the complete total of God's people. Twelve thousand stadia is approximately 1,500 miles, the distance between London and Athens, between New York and Houston, between Delhi and Rangoon, between Adelaide and Darwin. A city of this size is too large for the imagination to take in. John is certainly conveying the idea of splendour. And, more importantly, that of room for all.

17. The angel continued with his measurements and found that the *wall was 144 cubits*, about 72 yards. If we are trying to form a mental picture of all this we are in some trouble. The measurement will surely refer either to the wall's height or its thickness. If the former, it is curiously low for a city 12,000 stadia high, and we have been informed that the wall was 'great and high' (v. 12). If the latter, it needs no builder to discern that a wall 1,500 miles high needs a broader base than 72 yards. Clearly the number is symbolical. Swete takes the 144 cubits to be the wall height and sees it as underlining the point that 'the walls of the City are not for defence—for there is no enemy at large any more—but serve for delimitation'. This is probably the way to take it, with perhaps the added thought that 144

is the square of twelve, the number of Israel. John adds that the measure is *man's measurement* 'that is of the angel'. This appears to mean that the angel used ordinary human measures, not some extraordinary measure of his own.

18. The word *endōmēsis* is unusual, but apparently means that of which the wall is built. In that case it did not simply have jasper built into it but was built *of jasper*. This stone has already been used as something of a symbol of God (4:3), so we may say that the wall is from God and in its way reveals God. There is also the thought that it is God who is the city's defence. He is a wall round his people. John adds the information that *the city was of pure gold* 'like clear glass'. This is puzzling as gold is opaque. John may be referring to its shining appearance: the gold shone like glass. More probably he is taking clear glass as immensely costly. Among the ancients glass was usually very dark (NIV's *pure as glass* is misleading; glass was normally very impure); crystal-clear glass was extraordinarily valuable, something fit for a king's court (see note on 4:6). John is speaking of the heavenly city as built of the most costly materials.

19–20. *The foundations of the city walls were decorated* (the perfect indicates something permanent) *with every kind of precious stone* (cf. Isa. 54:11–12). The stones appear to be the same as those in the high priest's breastplate (Exod. 28:17–20). It is true that the names are not always the same, but this may well be, as some scholars suppose, because John is making his own translation from the Hebrew, and there may have been different ideas as to the Greek equivalents of the names in the original.

Charles argued that the stones correlate with the signs of the zodiac, but that John has them in the order exactly opposite to that of the sun as it passes through the constellations. If this be accepted, John is repudiating heathen concepts and using the order of the jewels to convey the thought that God reverses human judgments. In the first edition of this commentary I inclined to this view, but since then T. Francis Glasson seems to have shown that the authority on which Charles depended for the correlation is unreliable and that the view is untenable.² We should probably say no more than that the stones point to the high priest's breastplate.

John's first stone is *jasper*, for which see note on 4:3. The second is *sapphire*, which may be the blue, transparent stone that we denote by the term. Most authorities, however, maintain that the ancients referred to the lapis lazuli by this name. The third is *chalcedony*. With us this is a variety of quartz, but it is quite uncertain what the ancients meant by it. It may have been our chalcedony, but we can say no more. *Emerald* (cf. 4:3) was apparently a green stone. Next comes *sardonyx*, which is usually thought to denote a banded stone, perhaps a variety of agate. The sixth is *carnelian* (cf. 4:3). The seventh is *chrysolite* (lit. 'gold-stone'), which Hillyer thinks may be 'chrysolite, gold quartz, yellow quartz'. The eighth stone is *beryl*, 'precious stone of sea-green colour' (BAGD). Next comes *topaz*, which may have been yellow rock crystal (as Myres thinks, *EB*, pp. 4803f.), or topaz (Hillyer). The tenth stone is *chrysoptase*, 'an apple-green, fine-grained hornstone (variety of quartz), colored by nickel oxide and highly translucent' (BAGD). The eleventh is *jacinth* or hyacinth

(Gk. *hyakinthos*). Some take this to be a blue stone like the sapphire (BAGD, *IBD*), others hold that it is red (*EB*). cf. 9:17, where see note. Finally we have *amethyst*, a purple, transparent quartz crystal.

21. The *gates* of the city are quite magnificent, each one being *a single pearl* (cf. Isa. 54:12). There is a rabbinic statement: ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come bring precious stones and pearls which are thirty (cubits) by thirty and will cut out from them (openings) ten (cubits) by twenty, and will set them up in the gates of Jerusalem’ (*Baba Bathra* 75a). John is writing against a background that saw the heavenly city as containing huge pearls. New Jerusalem is not lacking in this respect. From the gates John moves to *the street*, which was *pure gold, like transparent glass* (cf. v. 18 and the note there). It is possible that we should take *like transparent glass* not with *gold* but with *pure* (it follows it immediately in the Greek). In transparent glass any flaw would show up. If it were pure it would be really pure. So with the gold of this city.

d. ‘No night there’ (21:22–22:5)

John now emphasizes the glories of heaven by depicting it as a place of light. There is no night there. God provides its light. This means that dark deeds are excluded and that there is no lack of life.

22. John *did not see a temple* (‘sanctuary’, *naos*), for God is its sanctuary (and its members are all priests, 20:6). The heaping up of titles, *Lord*, *God* and *Almighty* is impressive. Each has been used before, but the cumulative effect adds splendour. In the last state of things it is God’s presence alone that counts, and that is not confined to any one part of the city. It is characteristic that John adds *and the Lamb*. The Lamb is at the centre of things throughout this book.

23. Just as there is no need of a sanctuary where God is, so there is no place for light alongside him. God’s glory is the illumination for the blessed (cf. Isa. 60:20). *Sun* and *moon* are superfluous. The city does not need them. *The glory of God* lights it up and *the Lamb is its lamp*. This latter probably does not mean anything greatly different from the preceding statement, but it is in harmony with the general picture when the Lamb is put on a level with God as the source of light for the heavenly city.

24. *The nations* and *the kings of the earth* taken together stress the universality and the pre-eminence of the city. All look to it and *bring their splendour into it* (cf. Isa. 60). John does not envisage the salvation of a tiny handful and the destruction of the vast majority of mankind. He sees God as bringing ‘the Gentiles’ into his holy city. God’s purposes for mankind will not be frustrated.

25. Earthly cities shut their gates when darkness comes. Not this city. Indeed darkness cannot come to it for there is perpetual light within it. John makes two statements: first, the *gates* are not *shut* by day, then, *there will be no night there*. Thus there is no possibility of

the city's being shut.

26–27. John has described a city so wonderful that it is hard to see what *the glory and honour of the nations* could bring to it. He probably means, not that *the nations* add to its splendour, but that they render their homage. Some things cannot enter the city. *Nothing impure* is comprehensive, and John singles out two specifics: *anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful* (see note on v. 8). *What is shameful* probably has special reference to idolatry, and lying is reprobated elsewhere in this book. It is important that people speak truth and act truly. Smith rightly points out that 'one may be guilty of working or acting a lie without saying a single word'. Every lie is excluded from the heavenly city. By contrast, those who do enter are those *whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life*. Again there is the thought that salvation depends on what Christ has done.

22:1 *The angel* is probably the way to understand it (the Greek has simply 'he'). He now shows John *the river of the water of life* (cf. 7:17; 21:6; 22:17; and for a river which apparently indicates no meagre supply, Ps. 46:4). A river flowed out of Eden (Gen. 2:9–10), while Zechariah saw 'living water' going out from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8), and Ezekiel a river that flowed out from the temple and went down to the Dead Sea, growing deeper as it went and bringing life everywhere (Ezek. 47). All that was foreshadowed in such visions John sees fulfilled.

Clear as crystal conveys the idea of sparkling brilliance. Life takes its origin from God, for the river flowed *from the throne of God*. For the third time in this section John adds *and of the lamb* to his reference to God. He will not let us miss the supreme significance of the Lamb in the final state of things. But a reference to the Lamb as on the throne is unusual and Swete finds this 'a startling expression'. Usually the Lamb is 'in the centre of the throne' (5:6; 7:17), but he sits with the Father on the throne also in 3:21.

2. The river appears to flow through the broad *street*, whereas that in Ezekiel's vision flowed from the temple outwards. This river does not go out of the city, for all the redeemed are there. But it flows through the city supplying their need. On both sides of the river *stood the tree of life*. Preston and Hanson see an allusion to the tree of life from which people were excluded in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22–24). 'Now at last, almost at the end of the great drama of the Bible, man may return and legitimately enjoy the blessing which he was banished for illegitimately desiring.' Both *the river* and *the tree* are said to be *of life*, but nothing is said of the relationship between them. Probably we should not inquire too closely. John insists that life comes from God. The river and the tree are useful symbols, but no more.

The tree of life bears fruit *every month* and it is specifically said to bear *twelve crops of fruit* (i.e. twelve crops in succession, not twelve kinds of fruit). As there is neither sun nor moon there is of course no 'month'. But John's expression is perfectly intelligible. He is using the imagery to bring out his point that there is an abundant supply. He goes on to tell us that *the leaves of the tree* bring *healing to the nations* (cf. Ezek. 47:12). This provokes the

question, ‘Healing from what?’ We would naturally think of healing from sin were it not that every such thing is excluded (21:27). Walvoord takes the word to mean ‘health-giving’ and comments, ‘The leaves of the tree promote the enjoyment of life in the new Jerusalem, and are not for correcting ills which do not exist.’ For *the nations* see note on 21:24.

3. There is no *curse* (*katathema*, here only in the Greek Bible, means ‘accursed thing’ not ‘act of cursing’). This is the fulfilment of a prophecy (Zech. 14:11, ‘there shall be no more curse’, RSV; LXX has *anathema*). Instead, *the throne of God and of the Lamb* are there (cf. v. 1). We are reminded that Ezekiel ends his prophecy by telling us that the name of the city is ‘THE LORD IS THERE’ (Ezek. 48:35). Where God and the Lamb rule there is no accursed thing. On the contrary, God’s servants render service. The verb *latreuouein* has overtones of worship, and indeed NEB translates ‘his servants shall worship him’. Glasson comments, ‘This could be linked with the *name on their foreheads* (verse 4); the high priest in Exod. 28:36–8 had the words “Holy to the Lord” on his forehead. Now the whole community offers priestly worship.’ Heaven is not a place of indolent leisure, but a place where service is done, centring on God (whether *him* means God or Christ or both).

4. To *see* the face of God was denied to Moses (Exod. 33:20, 23), but it is the privilege of all God’s servants in the holy city. The consummation of their bliss is the vision of God. There is nothing between him and them. More, *his name is on their foreheads*, as in 14:1. They are wholeheartedly attached to God. They bear his name.

5. Once more we are assured that there is *no more night* there (21:23, 25; cf. Zech. 14:7) and that God gives them *light*. The section culminates with the assurance that *they will reign for ever and ever*. It is not said that they will reign over anyone, and, indeed, it is difficult to see who their subjects could be. The term indicates a blessed and exalted state. They share in royalty.¹

The new creation and the church perfected in glory: in the new world to come, the community of the redeemed will be completed, perfected, inviolable, and glorious because God’s consummated, glorious presence will reside among them forever, whereas the unfaithful will be excluded from such blessing (21:1–22:5)

This section could be divided into two parts, 21:1–8 and 21:9–22:5, though it is preferable to discern at least three sub-units within the larger segment, on the basis of introductory

¹ Morris, L. (1987). *Revelation: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 20, pp. 232–244). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

vision phraseology: 21:9–21; 21:22–27; and 22:1–5, given also that there are shifts of theme at just the points where the introductory vision formulas occur. 21:1 follows on the heels of 20:11, where “earth and heaven fled away” from the presence of God, and “no place was found for them.” Whereas in 20:12–15 judgment follows the cosmic destruction, in 21:1–8 a new creation follows the prior cosmic dissolution and replaces the old order. The theme of the new creation dominates ch. 21, though the preceding idea of judgment is not altogether forgotten (21:8, 27). 21:9–22:5 primarily recapitulates 21:1–8. The purpose of this last major segment is to highlight the contrast between the church imperfect (chs. 1–3) and the church perfected. Whereas chs. 1–3 focus on the churches’ weaknesses throughout the old age, one intention of 21:9–22:5, in contrast, is to foresee primarily the church in her perfected state for all eternity. The purpose of the contrasts with the sins of the church and those of Babylon, and the ultimate purpose of the entire segment, is to exhort believers in the present to persevere through temptations to compromise so that they may participate in the consummated glory of the perfected church.

The new creation will be where the faithful will experience the salvation blessing of intimate communion with God, but the unfaithful will be excluded from this blessing (21:1–8)

1 The first thing John sees is **a new heaven and a new earth**. The reason he sees a new cosmos is that **the first heaven and the first earth passed away**. The Greek word translated “new” is *kainos*, which usually indicates a newness in quality or essence rather than time (in which case *neos* is normally used; see further below). The first creation was impermanent, but the second will last forever (on the first-second and old-new distinction elsewhere in Revelation and the Bible see on 20:6). This points to the transformation of the fundamental physical structure of the creation. That “there shall no longer be any night” (22:5; cf. 21:25) indicates another difference, especially in contrast to Gen. 8:22: “While the earth remains ... day and night shall not cease.” Despite the discontinuities, the new cosmos will be an identifiable counterpart to the old cosmos and a renewal of it, just as the body will be raised without losing its former identity.

The allusions to Isaiah behind the phrases in 21:1, 4–5 (see below) are also best understood as prophecies of the transformation of the old creation instead of an outright new creation *ex nihilo*. It should not be assumed, however, that a renewal means that there will be no literal destruction of the old cosmos, just as the renewed resurrection body does not necessitate the analogous notion with regard to the physical body. That new creation follows the pattern of Christ’s resurrection is demonstrated by the exegetical link between new creation and resurrection (also alluding, as in 21:1, to Isa. 65:17–18) in Paul (2 Cor. 5:14–17; Col. 1:15–18; cf. Eph. 1:20 with 2:6–15) and in Revelation itself (see on 1:5 and 3:14). Strikingly, Paul likewise sees in Rom. 8:18–23 the renovation of the corrupted creation inextricably linked to the resurrection of the children of God.

John focuses on the role of the redeemed saints in the new creation. This is apparent in that the vision of 21:1–22:5 is primarily dominated by various figurative portrayals of the

glorified community of believers. Whereas 3:14 has pointed to the beginning of fulfillment of the new creation prophecy of Isa. 43:18–19 and 65:17 in Christ’s resurrection, the same Isaiah allusions here and in vv. 4–5 are applied to the church, most probably in its glorified state, though including more than that, as the references to a new heaven and earth indicate.

John describes what he is seeing in the words of Isa. 65:17 and 66:22 (which is a virtual repetition of 65:17). Isa. 65:16–18 prophesies a restoration of Israel in a new earth and heaven where joy and gladness will prevail, in contrast to the old earth characterized by weeping and crying. Isa. 66:22 speaks of the permanence of the new heaven and earth, as opposed to the temporary nature of the old. Israel’s return from Babylon fulfilled this prophecy only in an extremely limited and incomplete sense, leaving its final fulfillment long in the future. Through His death and resurrection, Christ began the establishment of the new Jerusalem (see on 3:14, where He is described as “the Beginning of the creation of God”), and this prophecy has been inaugurated throughout the church age, as people believe in Christ and become part of a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; similarly Gal. 6:15).

21:1 asserts that the inaugurated Isaiah prophecy will be fulfilled consummately at some future time. The vision does not describe features of the church age *prior* to the end, since the conditions portrayed emphasize the absence of every form of visible and invisible threat to the *entire* redeemed community, in both its spiritual and physical aspects (e.g., 21:1, 4, 8, 27; 22:3, 5).

The passing away of the old world is described additionally by the phrase **and there is no longer any sea**. Elsewhere in Revelation, the **sea** represents

the origin of cosmic evil (especially in the light of OT background; see 4:6; 13:1; 15:2; 16:3),

the unbelieving, rebellious nations who cause tribulation for God’s people (13:1; Isa. 57:20; cf. Rev. 17:1–2, 6),

the place of the dead (20:13),

the main arena in which the world’s idolatrous trade takes place (18:11–19), and

a literal body of water, part of the old creation (5:13; 7:1–3; 8:8–9; 10:2, 5–6, 8; 14:7).

The use here is likely a summarizing statement about how the various nuances of the sea throughout the book relate to the new creation. Therefore, it encompasses all of the above five meanings. That is, when the new creation comes, there will no longer be any threat from Satan, threat from rebellious nations, or death ever again in the new world, so that there is no room for the sea as the place of the dead. There also will be no more idolatrous trade practice using the sea as its main avenue. Even the perception of the literal sea as a murky, unruly part of God’s creation is no longer appropriate in the new cosmos, since the

new cosmos is to be characterized by peace. However, there will be a lake of fiery punishment (20:10, 14–15), but it will be located enigmatically outside the geographical perimeters of the new heavens and earth (21:27; 22:15). Just as there must be an eternally consummated form of the new creation in which God’s people dwell, so must there be an eternally consummated form of a realm of punishment in another dimension where unbelievers dwell.

While all the above meanings of “sea” are in mind, the allusion to Isaiah 65 and the immediate context suggest a focus on the sea as representing figuratively the threat of evil and tribulation for God’s people, a threat which no longer exists in the eternal state. The assertion that **there is no longer any sea** is further explained in v. 4, “and there shall no longer be any death.” The close parallels show that the latter develops the former. The evil nuance of the sea (included in the above five aspects) metaphorically represents the entire range of afflictions which formerly threatened God’s people in the old world. The allusion to Isa. 65:17 in vv. 1 and 4b and to Isa. 65:19 in v. 4b confirms the preceding explanation. In Isa. 65:16–19 and 51:10–11 the emphasis is not on the passing away of the material elements of the old world but on God’s doing away with the “former troubles” (65:16) due to oppression during captivity, so that “there will no longer be ... the voice of weeping and the sound of crying” (65:19).

This conclusion is supported by recognizing particularly the echo from Isa. 51:10–11 noted briefly above. This passage metaphorically equates the removal of the waters at the Red Sea deliverance to the removal of sorrows at the consummation of the ages (see further on v. 4). The absence of the sea may represent an element of escalation in the new creation, in contrast even to the pre-fall cosmos, which contained seas within it. This is true regardless of whether “sea” is understood literally or figuratively, though the above discussion shows that in all likelihood it is figurative for old world threats. This means that the presence of a literal sea in the new creation would not be inconsistent with the figurative “no sea” in 21:1.

2 The new world that v. 1 portrays as replacing the old is now called **the holy city, new Jerusalem**. John uses the words of Isa. 52:1b (“Jerusalem, the holy city”) to describe what he sees. This holy city, Isaiah prophesied, will be restored through the coming of the One who announces the gospel (52:7) in a latter-day deliverance from captivity and restoration to God’s presence (52:11–12). The command to Zion “to clothe yourself in your beautiful garments” (52:1a) forms the basis for the picture of the bride adorning herself with jewels in Isa. 61:10, which in turn forms the basis for this verse, which describes the new Jerusalem as **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband**. The fact that this Jerusalem is called **new** alludes to Isa. 62:1–2, which states that Jerusalem “will be called by a new name” at the time of its end-time glorification. Already in 3:12, identification with Christ’s new name has been seen as essentially the same as identification with God’s name and the name of the new Jerusalem. All three names refer to the intimate, latter-day presence of God and Christ with their people, as expressed in vv. 3–4 (see also 14:1–4). Although for John the new creation has already been inaugurated (see on 3:14), and

elsewhere the NT sees the new, invisible, heavenly Jerusalem as beginning to replace the old (Gal. 4:26–31; Heb. 12:22), the visionary words **I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God** expresses the consummation of that reality.

Thus, the city is **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband**, fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy (62:1–5) that Jerusalem will be like a bride married to God. Isaiah foresaw rejoicing by those the Lord would clothe at the time of Israel’s final restoration. The similar allusion in Rev. 19:7–8 about God’s intimacy with His redeemed people clarifies further that the bride is a metaphor for the saints. Throughout Revelation, the verb “make ready” or “prepare” (Greek *hetoimazō*) refers to God’s actions, not human actions (so 9:7, 15; 12:6; 16:12). So also here the intimate union of God and His people, and possibly His vindication of them, is a prophetic decree which v. 2 pictures as being fulfilled in the future. To be **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband** conveys the thought of God’s preparation of His people for Himself. Throughout history, God is forming His people to be His bride, so that they will reflect His glory in the ages to come (so Eph. 5:25–27), which the following context of Revelation 21 develops (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2).

Isaiah’s prophecy finds its fulfillment not in physical Israel but in the church as the continuation of true Israel, for Rev. 3:12 shows that both Jewish and Gentile believers (in the Philadelphia church) are included in the new Jerusalem, and 21:10–14 will reveal that the names of the apostles appear alongside those of the tribes of Israel in the new city’s structure. The woman of 12:1 (representing the community of faith in its suffering existence on earth) is an anticipation of the completed bride of v. 2, now finally secure from any dangers and residing in the midst of God’s perfect, full presence. Isaiah 61–62 serves as the background to both portrayals.

The image of the city, therefore, is likely figurative, representing the fellowship of God with His people in an actual new creation.

3 The introductory phrase **and I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying** has appeared earlier in almost identical form at 16:17 and 19:5. The announcement could come from the cherubim (as the following phrase refers to God in the third person), or possibly from God. The voice in v. 3 provides elaboration of the city and marriage metaphors of v. 2. These pictures are explained to describe the intimate communion which God and His people will have with one another: **Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.** The image of God’s tabernacling over Israel at Sinai and in the wilderness as connoting a marriage relationship has already been observed as part of the background for the marriage of the Lamb and His bride in 19:7–8 (on which see for the background in Ezek. 16:8–10). This reflects the prophetic promise of Ezekiel 43:7 that in the days of the new temple God “will tabernacle (or dwell) among the sons of Israel forever.”

An even more specific allusion is to Ezek. 37:27, which picks up the promise of Lev. 26:11–12 that a final time of restoration will come when God Himself will tabernacle or

make His dwelling in the midst of Israel, who will be His people and He will be their God. Already Rev. 7:15 has understood the prophecy of Israel's restoration in Ezek. 37:27 as fulfilled by Gentile as well as Jewish Christians (see on 7:15). Paul, quoting Lev. 26:12, teaches that the tabernacle is already present in preliminary form in the church (2 Cor. 6:16), but John here sees its completed fulfillment in the new creation. The OT prophecies without exception speak of a singular "people" (Greek *laos*) among whom God will dwell. Rev. 21:3 (contrary to NASB) changes the prophetic singular to plural "peoples" (*laoi*) in order to make obvious that the prophecies originally focusing on Israel have been fulfilled in "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (so 5:9; 7:9), though the latter are seen as an expanded continuation of true Israel. Zech. 2:10–11 anticipates this verse in foreseeing an ethnic expansion of the boundaries of true Israel by identifying "many nations" as "My people," an identification always used elsewhere in the OT for Israel.

God promised to Abraham that the nations were to be blessed only through the blessing of His Israelite seed (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:2–8; 26:24; Gal. 3:16). Ezek. 47:14 also bases Israel's eternal inheritance of the land and temple on the Abrahamic promise, and Ezek. 47:22–23 affirms that the only way Gentiles will be able to share in the promised inheritance of the new temple and land will be to become part of Israel: Gentile "aliens ... shall be to you [Israel] as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel." It is certainly clear NT doctrine that Gentiles do not partake of Israel's OT promises by becoming a part of old ethnic Israel's theocratic society. Revelation, like Paul (Gal. 3:16, 29), reveals that the nations are able to share in true Israel's redemptive blessing by means of trusting in Jesus, the true seed of Abraham and the only authentic Israelite, who died and rose for Jew as well as Gentile. All those represented by Jesus, the ideal king and Israelite, are themselves considered part of true Israel and share in the blessings He receives (see, for instance, on 2:17; 3:7, 9; 7:4–8; 12:1–2, 5, 17).

Only Jews were allowed to enter the old tabernacle, and among them only the priests. However, now in v. 3 the divine presence is not limited by the physical boundaries of an Israelite sanctuary, since not only all believing Israelites, but all peoples experience God's intimate tabernacling presence. Jew and Gentile have not only been united in Christ but have also gained the status of priests serving before God's presence (20:6; 22:3–4). This is therefore the first hint that there is no literal temple in the new Jerusalem, a fact which is explicitly stated in 21:22, where the ultimate redemptive-historical reason for the absence of a physical temple building is that God and Christ are the final, enduring form of the temple, to which the physical OT temple always pointed.

4 In this new creation, God's people will no longer experience any of the forms of suffering characteristic of the old creation: **and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain.** When this occurs in the future, it will be a fulfillment of prophecy from Isa. 25:8: "the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces" (see also on Rev. 7:17). Both Isa. 35:10 and 51:11 predict that at the time of Israel's full restoration to God the people will experience "everlasting joy" and "gladness" because they will be protected from their

former sufferings of “sorrow and sighing,” which will have fled away. It is more than coincidental that only one verse earlier in Isaiah 51 the prophet reflects on the first exodus, when God caused the sea to dry up (Isa. 51:10), comparing the first deliverance to the latter-day deliverance of God’s people, even as the eradication of the sea in Rev. 21:1 removes all barriers to the final fulfillment of God’s fellowship with His people in vv. 2–4. The subsequent similar sayings that “there shall no longer be any curse” (22:3) and that “there shall no longer be any night” (22:5) also indicate that none of the evils and threats of the old world can hinder the saints from fully enjoying the consummate presence of God. The “curse” (see 22:3) of death and its associated sufferings, which were introduced in the first Eden, will be removed in the last Eden. The conclusion of v. 4 that **the first things have passed away** again fulfills Isaiah’s prophetic utterances, “Do not call to mind the former things.... Behold, I will do something new” (Isa. 43:18–19), “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind” (Isa. 65:17). V. 1 has introduced the theme of the first heaven and earth passing away, which is reiterated in its parallel expression in v. 4.

5 The theme of the new creation coming in its finality is continued in vv. 5–8. The speaker here (**And He who sits on the throne said**) is undoubtedly God. The first divine statement, **Behold, I am making all things new**, draws again from Isaiah (as did vv. 1, 4, alluding to chs. 43, 65, and 66): “Behold, I will do something new” (Isa. 43:19; cf. Isa. 66:22). In 2 Cor. 5:17, Paul sees the same Isaiah prophecy (Isa. 43:18–19 and 65:17) beginning to be fulfilled through Christ’s death and resurrection. John adds the word **all** to highlight the consummate fulfillment of the prophecies. This does not suggest salvific universalism, but rather that all the people of God, along with the heavens and the earth, will be transformed into a new creation. The present tense (**I am making**) does not refer to the present time of the church age, but enforces the certainty that the future new creation will occur.

God commands John: **Write, for these words are faithful and true**, which is rooted in Isa. 65:16 (for a similar description of Christ rooted in the same verse, see 3:14). In Isaiah the Hebrew text refers to God as the God of truth (Hebrew *amen*), whose blessing in 65:17 is to be that of the new creation which He will bring about. The promise is **faithful and true** because, as Isaiah prophesied, God Himself is the One who, without doubt, will carry it out. The statement of v. 5b, **these words are faithful and true**, will be repeated verbatim in 22:6, which functions as a conclusion to the new creation promises of 21:1–22:5 and has therefore probably been formed from the same Isaiah 65 wording.

6 The next word John hears is the Greek word *gegonan*, literally **they**, that is, the prophetic promises, **are done** (NASB “It is done”). This underscores the climactic nature of the fulfillment of the prophecies woven throughout vv. 1–5, though uppermost in mind is the “new things” of v. 5. Similarly, 16:17 uses almost the same expression (*gegonen*, “It is done”) to indicate final fulfillment. However, there it stresses the fulfillment of God’s promises to judge the ungodly. Here, it designates the accomplishment of the new creation,

which was set in motion at the cross when Jesus cried, "It is finished!"

The divine speaker identifies Himself as **the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end**. Along with the similar expressions, "the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (22:13), these titles describe God's control over history, especially as He brings it to an end in salvation and judgment. Use of the first and last letters of the alphabet was an ancient figure of speech for the totality of everything in between. Vv. 5–6 are only the second time in the entire book where God is explicitly quoted. The first is in 1:8. Both there and here the title **the Alpha and the Omega** occurs. That this title appears at the beginning of the book and at the end is fitting and cannot be coincidental. That is to say, the totality of all the events narrated and portrayed between 1:8 and 21:6 lie under God's absolute sovereignty, as does all history prior to the writing of Revelation. Therefore, the two titles in 21:6 refer to God's absolute sovereignty over all events in history. On this basis, the readers are assured that just as God brought the first creation into being, just as certainly He will bring it to conclusion.

The remainder of v. 6 shows that the two titles provide assurance that God in His absolute sovereignty is able to give blessings to His redeemed people: **I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost**. The same pattern appears in 22:12–13, where similar divine titles provide assurance that Christ will "render to every man according to what he has done" climactically at the end of history. This includes both blessing (21:6; 22:17) and judgment (21:8; 22:15). The allusion here is first to Isa. 49:10, "They will not hunger or thirst.... For He who has compassion on them ... will guide them to springs of water." The living waters, which portray eternal life, have their origin in God and the Lamb (so 22:1, 17 and similarly Jer. 2:13; Ps. 36:8–9; Joel 3:18; John 4:10; 7:38). This is the life of eternal fellowship with God and Christ reserved for those who have maintained their faith in the Lamb's atoning death and their testimony to His redemptive work. The allusion is also to Isa. 55:1 (which itself develops the thought of Isa. 49:10): "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." In line with the preceding context of vv. 1–5, the church fulfills the restoration prophecy of Isa. 49:10 and 55:1, whereas Jewish tradition interpreted Isa. 49:10–13, 21 to be fulfilled only by Jewish exiles (e.g., *Pesikta Rabbati* 31).

7 V. 7 defines God's people, the recipients of the new creation promises, as overcomers. Overcomers conquer through refusal to compromise their faith, even though it may cost them their lives (see further on 2:28–29). V. 7 summarizes the reception of the multiple promises in vv. 1–6 by saying **He who overcomes shall inherit these things**. The purpose of this verse, and of the whole of 21:1–22:5, is to encourage the true Christian to persevere through hardship in order to inherit the fullness of God's blessings. All the promises made to the overcomers in the letters section (chs. 2 and 3) are fulfilled in this closing section, which describes the new Jerusalem and the eternal reward of the believer:

“the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (2:7 and 22:2),
inclusion in the new temple (3:12 and 21:22ff.),
participation in “the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God”
(3:12 and 21:2, 10),
God’s name written on one’s person (3:12 and 22:4),
one’s name written in the book of life (3:5 and 21:27),
bright garments as a reward (3:5 and 21:2, 9ff.; cf. 19:7–8),
a bright stone and a luminary, whether star or lamp (2:17, 28 and 21:11, 18–21, 23;
22:5, 16),
consummate reigning with Christ (2:26–27; 3:21 and 22:5), and
exclusion from the second death (2:11; 21:7–8).

These blessings are summed up in the one promise of v. 7, **I will be his God and he will be My son**. This fulfills a prophetic promise given to David for the One who would come from his house, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me” (2 Sam. 7:14); “He will cry to me, ‘Thou art my Father.’ ... I also shall make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:26). The promise is applied according to the concept of corporate representation by which Christ represents His people. This is in line with the individual and corporate fulfillment of Ps. 2:8–9 already mentioned in Rev. 2:26–27. Since saints are in Christ (cf. 1:9), they will inherit fully what Christ inherits (note the eternal reign of Christ in 5:12–13 and 11:15 and that of the saints in 22:5).

8 On the other hand, those who are not included among God’s people will be excluded from His presence, which is itself judgment. The list of vices is a summary of typical sins which the author has been warning the churches not to commit. The **cowardly and unbelieving** are not just unbelievers in general but more precisely those who have claimed to belong to the covenantal church community but who, driven by fear of humans rather than of God, have compromised in the face of persecution. The **cowardly** are those in the visible community of faith who have “turned back” in the holy war with the world and have not been courageously faithful in the battle against the beast. **Cowardly** (Greek *deilos*) suggests an empty faith, since it is followed by **unbelieving** (cf. Matt. 8:26 and Mark 4:40, where the same word is followed by references to those having little or no faith).

Also included in the list are the **abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars**. These sins have reference to pagan unbelievers, as well as some within the visible covenant community. Indeed, forms of fornication and idolatry common in the pagan world were threats testing the faith of some in the churches (see on 2:14, 20–21 for this in general and for the meaning of “immorality,”

Greek *porneia*). These vices are associated with a context of idol worship in both the OT and the NT (see on 9:21 for references), as well as in Revelation. For **abominable** as a reference to idolatry, see on 17:4–5. Such sins either form part of the activities involved in idolatry, or, as abominations, they actually become acts of idolatry themselves (for idolatry involving murder [child-sacrifice] see also Ps. 106:36–38). **Murderers** include those agents of the beast and the harlot who have persecuted the saints who refuse to cooperate with the economic system of idolatry (13:15; 17:6). **Immoral persons** (or “fornicators,” Greek *pornoí*) may be linked to cult prostitution, which was also associated with pagan temples and worship as far back as ancient Canaanite culture. Likewise, sorcery and magic were often practiced in connection with idolatry (**sorcerers and idolators**) long before NT times (see Lev. 19:26–29; Deut. 18:9–11, the latter of which associates child sacrifice and sorcery). Interestingly, 2 Kgs. 9:22 links “harlotries” and “witchcrafts” with Jezebel (for further on Jezebel see on 2:20–24).

The catalog of sins concludes with **all liars**. The phrase likely points to a focus on those whose Christian profession is betrayed either by compromising behavior or false doctrine. The word refers to false apostles in 2:2 and to ethnic Jews falsely claiming to be God’s true people in 3:9. John uses the phrase elsewhere to refer to those within the church whose behavior or doctrine contradicts their purported profession of faith in Jesus (1 John 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10).

An almost identical list of sinners as in v. 8 occurs in 22:15, and a similar but abbreviated catalog concludes ch. 21 (v. 27). Both these subsequent lists end with “lying,” which emphasizes the judgment on those whose apparent Christian profession is contradicted by their lifestyle or false doctrine. Tit. 1:16 expresses a similar thought: “they profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed.” Possibly also in mind are those who promote the lie about the beast (13:12–15). In 3:9, lying is associated with being a devotee of Satan (likewise in 2:9), the original liar (John 8:44) and deceiver (Rev. 12:9; 20:2–3). Rev. 14:5 says the genuine people of God persist in not lying, which refers to perseverance in professing the truth about the gospel and in not compromising. The absence of liars in the new world shows that the coming order will exist on a higher moral level than even the pre-fall cosmos, where the Satanic liar was allowed entrance.

The wicked have their part **in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death**. This figurative portrayal of punishment indicates that there is additional suffering beside the anguish of separation from God (for discussion of **fire and brimstone** and the eternal nature of **the second death** see on 14:10–11; 19:20; 20:10). As observed already, the antitheses of old vs. new and first vs. second contrast the partial and temporal with the consummate and eternal (see on 20:5–6). So here **second death** refers to a perfected and eternal punishment. It is noteworthy that the new creation is what the righteous alone “inherit” (v. 7). The unrighteous, whether pseudo-Christians or the non-Christian world in general, will not inherit the coming new world and therefore will not reside within the borders of the new cosmos. 21:1–22:5 shows that the blessing of

God's presence permeates the entire new creation, whereas 21:8 and 27 indicate that God's judgment is revealed outside the confines of the new world (see also 22:15). Even though the second death is a perfected punishment, those who suffer it do so outside the geography of the new universe, since we have already been told that "there shall no longer be any death ... or pain" in the new order of things (v. 4).

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 21:1-8

On the nature of the new creation. How many people think about the afterlife as an ethereal eternal existence, some even picturing saints floating forever on clouds? Unfortunately, this is not only the perspective of nominal believers; even many true Christians sometimes have such a view. But the new creation is described in these verses as a fundamental physical transformation of the old creation and its renewal. At this time, the body will be raised from the dead and be gloriously transformed. This bodily transformation is pictured in our passage as the church becoming a perfected bride. The saints to whom John is writing now see their future in the plan of God. The new creation is a place of righteousness and holiness (2 Pet. 3:13). The making of all things new refers primarily to the inhabitants of the new creation as well as its physical topography, in which they will live. Thus, the destiny of God's people is to live with resurrected physical bodies in the newly transformed physical environment of the eternal new earth and heavens. This a quite a different picture of the eternal afterlife than many of God's people have.

On identification and intimacy with God. Various images used here speak of the closest possible relationship between God and His people. The church is prepared as a bride. Christians are given a new name, which identifies them with the character of God and as being in a marriage relationship with Him. God tabernacles or dwells intimately with His people. If this is our destiny, how should we be preparing ourselves for it? How often is the subject of intimacy with God addressed among Christians? How often do we dwell on Paul's teaching in Eph. 5:22-33, which uses marriage as the closest human analogy to our relationship with Christ? How can we cultivate intimacy with God in a society so devoted to pleasure, superficiality, and over-activity? God wants our true desire and joy to be in Him, and His promise of intimately tabernacling with us is the way we will enjoy and desire Him forever. What are we doing now to cultivate our desire for Him? Ps. 119:111 is one way that we can grow in our joy and desire for God: "I have inherited Thy testimonies [God's word] forever, for they are the joy of my heart." Reading and meditating on God's word leads to thinking God's thoughts after Him, which increases our joy in Him.

On the promises of God. The commentary notes how all the promises of God made to the earthly saints in the letters are fulfilled in this section. How important it is to reflect on the fact that God is faithful to His promises and that it is not unspiritual or selfish to suppose He rewards those who seek and serve Him, since that is His will for us. God does want our best. How often do we list the promises He has already fulfilled for us and use that as an encouragement for the fulfillment of all that is yet to come?

In the world to come the community of the redeemed will be inviolable, completed, perfected, and glorious because of the consummated, glorious, and eternal presence of God (21:9–22:5)

The remainder of the vision can be divided in the following thematic manner: initial view and appearance of the city (21:9–14), the measurements of the city (21:15–17), the material of the city (21:18–21), the internal features of the city (21:22–27), and the symbols of the presence of God in the city (22:1–5).

Broadly speaking, the structure of the city is based on the vision in Ezekiel 40–48, which prophesies the pattern of the latter-day temple (chs. 40–44) and the arrangement of the city and the land around it (chs. 45–48). This section further interprets the yet-future fulfillment of Ezekiel by collapsing temple, city, Garden of Eden, and new creation into one end-time picture portraying the one reality of God’s communion with His people. Ezekiel does identify temple, city, and land as representing the same entity, while not merging them in quite the same way. He understands both the land and the temple (37:25–28), as well as the city (48:35), as signifying God’s everlasting dwelling place. The fact that here the bride is equated with the city (vv. 2, 10) shows that a literal city is not being described.

Rev. 21:9–22:5 recapitulates 21:1–8 and amplifies the picture there of God’s consummate communion with His people and their consummate safety in the new creation. The bride of v. 2 is developed in vv. 9–11; the tabernacle of v. 3 is developed in vv. 22–24; the water of v. 6 is developed in 22:1; and the fate of the sinners of v. 8 is developed in v. 27. The reference to the “beloved city” under attack (20:9) suggests that the city portrayed in 21:9–22:5 is revealed in hidden, partial form throughout the church age as a result of Christ’s redemptive work (see on 20:9). The segment here reveals the perfected form of the city. The extensive parallels noted between vv. 1–8 and 21:9–22:5 argue against the contention of some that the second section portrays an earlier earthly millennium, while the first section describes the eternal state.

The initial view and appearance of the city: the glorious presence of God establishes the inviolable and completed community of the redeemed (21:9–14)

9–10 The recapitulation begins in vv. 9–10, where John is shown **the bride, the wife of the Lamb ... the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God**. These are almost identical phrases to those in v. 2. Here the hearing and then seeing pattern observed elsewhere in Revelation recurs (see, e.g., on 5:5, where he hears about a “lion” and in 5:6 sees a “lamb”). In v. 9, he hears that he will see the bride; in v. 10, he sees the holy city, which interprets what he heard. Just as vv. 3–8 explain the meaning of the bride and city of vv. 1–2, so similarly does 21:11–22:5 expand the significance of the bride and city in 21:9–10.

The wording in vv. 9–10 is almost identical to that in 17:1, 3, which introduced Babylon. This underlines the contrast between the two women, the harlot Babylon and the bride of

the Lamb. The immoral and unfaithful conduct of Babylon is contrasted with the faithfulness of the bride. Both cities (Babylon and the new Jerusalem) are adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls (17:4; 21:18–21). The harlot's adornment (17:4) represents worldly economic forces which, in collusion with the state, are persecuting Christians and seducing them to compromise their faith (for the economic focus see also 14:8; 17:2; 18:16). The adornment of the bride, however, represents her faithful works or her vindicated condition as a result of those acts (see further on 19:7–8; 21:2). Her adornment with precious foundation stones of the temple (vv. 18–21) shows that God Himself has provided her redemption, which reflects the glory of the new creation (see similarly 1 Cor. 3:5–15 and 1 Pet. 2:4–7). The parallelism of the two portrayals suggests that the portrait of the bride in this section is symbolic rather than literal, as was that of Babylon (e.g. 17:9, 12, 15, 18). Both pictures are introduced by the word “show” (Greek *deiknymī*), which in 17:1 clearly refers to a symbolic vision. The harlot represents human culture in opposition to God, while the bride represents not a literal place or city but the redeemed community faithful to God (see above on v. 3). There is a literal new cosmos, but the point of the vision is to focus on exalted saints as the central feature of the new order (see further on v. 1 above).

John is **carried ... away in the Spirit**, as was Ezekiel (3:12, 14; 11:1; 43:5). As in Ezekiel's case, John's repeated rapture into the realm of the Spirit further underscores his prophetic commission and authority (see on 1:10; 4:2; and especially 17:3, where allusions to the Ezekiel commissions occur in the same manner). It is significant that this verse combines Ezek. 43:5 (“And the Spirit lifted me up”) with Ezek. 40:2 (“In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me on a very high mountain; and on it ... there was a structure like a city”). This combination indicates beyond doubt that the vision in Rev. 21:11ff. is to be identified with the blissful vision of the future temple in Ezekiel 40–48. The angel transports John to a **great and high mountain** where also the new city-temple is likely located. OT prophecy, as in Ezekiel, understood the coming Jerusalem to be situated on a high mountain (see also Isa. 2:2–3; 4:1–5; 25:6–26:2; Mic. 4:1–2).

What Ezekiel saw was to happen in the future is still seen by John as set for the future. Both visions prophesy the same reality of the final, permanent establishment of God's presence with His people. However, the different pictorial details in John's vision serve to interpret the Ezekiel vision.

11 The theme of God's presence with His people, briefly developed in vv. 1–8, is introduced here and runs throughout 21:11–22:5. The city of v. 10 is further described as **having the glory of God**. In the new creation, God's presence will not be limited to a temple structure with the people outside the structure, but the people themselves will be both the city and the temple in which God's presence resides (so vv. 2–3, 12–14). In the light of the clear allusions to Isaiah 40–66 in 21:1–22:5, the reference to **the glory of God** must derive from Isa. 58:8 and 60:1–2, 19, where there is the prophetic portrayal of “the glory of the Lord” residing in the latter-day Jerusalem (for allusions to Isaiah 40–66 in ch. 21, see for instance the references to Isa. 65:17–19 in vv. 1–2, 4, Isa. 54:11–12 in v. 19, and

Isa. 60:19–20 in v. 23). Note particularly Isa. 60:1–3: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.... The Lord will rise upon you.... And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” Whereas v. 2 speaks of the bride adorned for her husband, this verse clarifies that the clothing is in fact God’s glory, which is none other than His awesome, tabernacling presence with His people. This confirms our conclusion above that v. 3 interprets the city and marriage pictures of v. 2 as referring to the intimate communion which God will have with His people.

The city’s **brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.** This continues the Ezek. 43:5 allusion from the previous verse. Ezekiel saw the glory of God coming into the new temple, and the earth shone with His glory (43:2; cf. also 43:4–5). This glory is compared to a **brilliance** or “star” (Greek *phōstēr*), the same word used in the Greek OT (LXX) in Dan. 12:3, where God’s latter-days people “shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven.” It is also used by Paul when he speaks of God’s people shining like stars as they hold forth the word of life to an unbelieving world (Phil. 2:15). Zechariah prophesied that God would be a wall of fire around the latter-day Jerusalem and would cause His glory to dwell in her midst (Zech. 2:5). Note how Christ is referred to metaphorically as “the bright morning star” (22:16; cf. 2:28). As in 4:3, when John attempts to describe God’s glory, the closest he can come is to refer to it as radiant precious stones. This partly accounts likewise for the similar descriptions of the city in vv. 18–21.

12–13 The city is now described as having **a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.** The wall represents the inviolable nature of the city’s (= the renewed covenant community’s) fellowship with God, as implied by v. 27 and 22:14–15. This alludes to Isa. 26:1–2: “In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: ‘We have a strong city; He sets up walls and ramparts for security. Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter ...’” (LXX: “He will make salvation a wall and a surrounding wall”).

That the first part of the city structure which John sees is a wall and gates continues the allusion to Ezekiel 40–48 begun in vv. 9–11. The multiple gates of the Ezekiel temple in ch. 40 and the twelve gates of the city in Ezek. 48:31–34 are merged into one group of twelve gates arranged around the one city-temple of John’s vision (and note the repeated reference to temple walls in Ezekiel 40–43, e.g., 40:5). One angel is stationed at each gate, a feature not found in Ezekiel. In this respect, they are comparable to the angels of the churches and the twenty-four elders, who represent the true people of God, the true Israel (e.g., see on 4:4). Both this vision and that of Ezekiel feature four groups of three gates facing north, east, south, and west, and in both each gate has one of the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel written on them.

14 In addition to the twelve gates in the wall, **the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** The number twenty-four (the sum of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles) has

also occurred in the scene of the twenty-four elders in 4:3–4. In both scenes, the glory of God shines like jasper (4:3; 21:11), suggesting that the twenty-four elders of ch. 4 are angelic beings representing the sum of all God's people of both covenants (see on 4:4). The number twenty-four may also be based collectively on David's organization of the cult of temple servants into twenty-four orders of priests (1 Chron. 24:3–19), twenty-four Levitical gatekeepers (1 Chron. 26:17–19), and twenty-four orders of Levites who were commissioned (1 Chron. 25:1–31) to prophesy "in giving thanks and praising the Lord" (25:3). Jewish tradition (the Qumran peshet on Isaiah 54) explained the precious stones of Isa. 54:11–12 as symbols of the twelve priests and the heads of the twelve tribes who represented Israel before God. The Chronicles background is enhanced here because of the temple context throughout ch. 21 and the Jewish "priestly" interpretation of Isa. 54:11–12 in association with the number twenty-four. The integration of the apostles together with the tribes of Israel as part of the city-temple's structure (the structure prophesied in Ezekiel 40–48) confirms further our assessment in 7:15; 11:1–2; and 21:2–3 that the multiracial Christian church will be the redeemed group who, together with Christ, will fulfill the Ezekiel prophecy about the future temple and city. This is in line with other NT passages where the whole covenant community forms a spiritual temple in which God's presence dwells (1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21–22; 1 Pet. 2:5).

It is noteworthy that in v. 14 the apostles are part of the foundation, whereas the tribes are part of the gates in the wall built on the foundation. One might have expected the opposite, since Israel preceded the church in redemptive history. However, the reversal figuratively highlights the fact that fulfillment of Israel's promises has finally come in Christ who, together with the apostolic witness to His fulfilling work, forms the foundation of the new temple, the church, which is the new Israel (so also Eph. 2:20–22). In 3:12 Christ promised that the one overcoming, whether Jewish or Gentile Christian, will become "a pillar in the temple of My God ... and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name." That was the first substantial hint in the book that later, in ch. 21, the concepts of city and temple would be collapsed into the one concept of the presence of Christ and God with His people (see further on 3:12 and 22:4). The present argument that the city and the temple of ch. 21 are one and the same is in line with our prior identification of temple, altar, outer court, and holy city as the Christian community in 11:1–2 (on which see), and is consistent with our previous identifications of the church with Israelite prophecies, names, and institutions (see on 1:6–7, 12; 2:9, 17; 3:9, 12; 5:10; 7:2–8, 14–15).

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 21:9–14

On the church as God's temple. The city in these verses is introduced in conscious contrast to the harlot Babylon of ch. 17. It is presented, by means of very clear allusions to the prophet, as the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision of the new temple. The primary characteristic of the city-temple is the presence of God's glory, which is an escalation of God's glorious presence in Israel's old temple. The very same OT prophecies of the end-time temple alluded to in

Rev. 21:3 are also appealed to by Paul in 2 Cor. 6:16 (Lev. 26:12 and Ezek. 37:27) in supporting the notion that the church is the temple of God. The practical conclusion that Paul draws from the church being the beginning form of the temple is found in 2 Cor. 7:1: "Therefore, having these promises [the temple promises being uppermost in mind], beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Priests in the OT were to keep temples clean from defilement. Now that believers are part of the temple in this age, they are to keep the temple from sinful defilement. To the degree that we do this, God's glorious tabernacling presence will shine increasingly through us. There is likely some hint of this notion here, though ch. 21 does picture the consummated form of the purified and glorious temple in the final, eternal new creation. When sin infects believers now, they (being part of the temple) should see the tension between their present lives and this vision of the pure, consummated, and glorious temple. What implications does the contrast to the harlot have for the present conduct of the church in its albeit imperfect inaugurated manifestation of God's temple on earth? Have we lost an emphasis on holiness previous Christian generations may have had? To what extent does the world see the glory and character of God in us now? We are His image, a people placed in the end-time temple to reflect His glory.

The measurements of the city: God's permanent presence secures and guarantees the perfected inviolability of the redeemed community (21:15–17)

15 Vv. 15–17 continue to present an amplified version of vv. 1–8. The image of an angelic figure measuring parts of the city-temple with a measuring rod is a further allusion to Ezek. 40:3–5. Throughout Ezekiel 40–48, an angel measures parts of the temple complex. In the LXX, the verb "measure" (Greek *diametreō*) and the noun "measure" (Greek *metron*) appear about thirty times each. The angel **had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall**. The measuring portrays the security of the inhabitants (Jew and Gentile alike, as is evident from 3:9–12 [on which see]; 21:12–14, 24–26; 22:2) against the harm and contamination of unclean and deceptive people (so 21:27; 22:14–15). This measuring of the city-temple here figuratively represents the placing of God's boundaries around the city by which it is protected from harm and from the entrance of any form of evil. The measuring is thus the same as the sealing of believers pictured in 7:3 (on which see). In 11:1–2, the angel also measures the temple, which there represents the church as the place of God's dwelling on earth. In that case, however, only the inner court (representing the security of the believers' place with God) is measured, whereas the outer court (presenting the vulnerability of the church to attack and persecution) is left unmeasured. Now, however, the entire temple is measured, for in the consummated form of the temple God's people are protected in every way, spiritually as well as physically (cf. v. 4).

16 John next sees that **the city is laid out as a square** and sees an angel who **measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles**, literally "twelve thousand stadia." The city is actually cubic, since **its length and width and height are equal**. Ezek. 45:2 likewise asserts that the temple complex the prophet is to measure will be a square.

The Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple was also cubic (1 Kgs. 6:20, which is probably alluded to here). The altars in the tabernacle of Moses were square (Exod. 27:1; 30:2), as was the priest's breastpiece (Exod. 28:16). The repeated mention of measuring in this verse underlines the main point that God is promising that His presence will be with His people. This is highlighted by the allusion to Zech. 2:2, where the angel goes "to measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is." This in turn is connected with the assurance that God will be a wall of fire around the city and the glory in her midst (Zech. 2:5). God's return to Jerusalem is also connected with His measuring of the temple itself as a part of measuring the city (Zech. 1:16), so that the ideas of the end-time temple and the end-time Jerusalem overlap. The idea is likely that God's glorious and fiery presence in the temple will spread and cover the entire city, thus sanctifying the city as a big sacred temple space.

The equal measurement of twelve thousand stadia of each of the city's dimensions reinforces the figurative idea of the completeness of God's people found earlier in the twelve tribes and apostles; it is twelve multiplied by one thousand, a number of completeness. The figurative nature of the number is indicated by the height of the wall, recorded as "one hundred and forty-four cubits" (= approximately two hundred and sixteen feet) in v. 17, which is not in proportion with the height of the city if the "twelve thousand stadia" in v. 16 is taken literally. It is possible that the calculation is of the wall's thickness instead of height, but two hundred and sixteen feet is only a fraction of the width needed for the base of a wall which is fifteen hundred miles high. The enormous size of the city (the perimeter being approximately five and a half thousand miles, taking one Greek stadion to be two hundred yards) makes it about the same size as the then-known Hellenistic world, thus further suggesting that the temple-city represents the redeemed of all nations.

If John is indicating that the measurements of vv. 15–17 include all redeemed humanity (not just Jewish believers in a restored Jerusalem), this might provide the key to understanding John's simplifying and abbreviating use of details from the Ezekiel 40–48 vision, together with his universalization of some of the elements from that vision. The city's measurements are not physically literal or architectural, nor are they nationalistic symbols of a restored temple and Jerusalem, as appears to be the case in Ezekiel 40–48, but rather symbolize the inclusion of the Gentiles as part of the true temple and Jerusalem. Some commentators have noticed that the portrayal in vv. 16–17 has striking similarity to ancient descriptions of the city of Babylon. If the similarity is drawn intentionally, then the purpose would be to contrast the true, everlasting city with the false, impermanent city of Babylon. The latter tries to ascend to heaven by its own ungodly, human effort (Gen. 11:4; Rev. 18:5), while the other will be established by descending from heaven from God. Such a direct contrast with the Babylonian system is likely because of the explicit link in vv. 9–10 to the introduction to the vision of Babylon's destruction in 17:1, 3. As seen above, the purpose of the link was to contrast various features of Babylon with the new Jerusalem (see on vv. 9–10).

17 The angel now measures the wall to be one hundred and forty-four cubits. The only other occurrences of the number appear in 7:4–9 and 14:1, 3, where the 144,000 are not a

remnant of ethnic Jews at the very end of the age, but represent the totality of God's people throughout the ages, who are viewed as true Israelites (see on 7:4–8 and 14:1). The wall and its dimensions here represent the same reality, since vv. 12–14 have equated the essential parts of the “great and high wall” (v. 12) with the representatives of the entire people of God. Some have observed that the number in 7:4–8 and 14:1, 3 is the result of the square of the twelve tribes of Israel (= one hundred and forty-four) multiplied by one thousand (another number of completeness) to equal 144,000. This figurative reckoning is confirmed from v. 16, where each of the four sides of the cubic new Jerusalem equals twelve thousand stadia, the sum of which equals 144,000, which have just been seen in v. 16 to represent the completeness of God's people. Now the immediately following statement in v. 17 that the wall equals one hundred and forty-four cubits echoes the 144,000 as the complete number of God's people. This results in a nice figurative proportional relationship between the numbers of vv. 16 and 17, whereas a literal reckoning results in a bizarre and unnatural picture (see above on v. 16). The figurative nature of the number is indicated by the fact that one hundred forty-four cubits would be hopelessly out of proportion to a city fifteen hundred feet high. Literalists have suggested that the measurement is only of the wall's thickness, not height, but if the wall were measured in the same way the city was, then its height, width, and length would have been measured (as also in Ezek. 40:5 and 42:20). Furthermore, the wall's height is likely in mind since in the OT height was a characteristic feature noted about walls in order to emphasize the security they provided for cities (e.g., Deut. 3:5; 28:52). Here and in v. 16, the dimensions of cubits and stadia should not be given contemporary equivalents in imperial or metric measurements, since the figurative nature and intention of the original numbers become distorted.

Understanding the verse this way explains the following phrase **according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements**. One might assume that a human standard of measurement would be different than an angelic standard. But John's visions come with two levels of meaning. On one level, he sees visions composed of earthly pictures which he can understand, whether it be lions, human figures, books, or someone measuring a wall in an ordinary manner. However, the purpose of the visionary images is to reveal to John the deeper meaning or heavenly truths which the earthly images symbolize (1:20; 4:5; 5:6, 8; 7:13–14; 11:4, 8; 14:4; 16:13–14; 17:9, 12, 15, 18; 19:8; 20:2, 14; 21:8, 22). In 1:20, we are told that the (literally seen) stars are to be symbolically understood as angels and the (literally seen) lampstands as churches. Here likewise we are given a literal picture or vision (the human measurements) followed by its interpretation (**which are also angelic measurements**). John sees in a vision someone measuring the dimensions of a city wall according to the standard of human measurement with which he would be familiar from everyday life, though the literal calculation would have probably left the readers confused, since the size of the walls would be nonsensically out of proportion to the rest of the city's measurements. But, in order to alleviate the confusion over the literal disproportion, John then adds that this vision of “human measurement” is to be understood more deeply according to its symbolic, heavenly, or “angelic” meaning. This

reminds the readers that if their comprehension of his vision is limited only to a surface level (the physically literal meaning), they will misunderstand it.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 21:15–17

On the significance of the measurements of the temple. The commentary presents evidence that the measurements of the city wall (based on Ezekiel 40–48) emphasize the security of the city, that is, the security of God’s glorified covenant community in the eternal new creation. Nothing can harm them any more, nor can any evil threaten them. This is already true of the church’s spiritual relationship to God, as we have seen from the significance of the “measuring” (also based on Ezekiel 40–48) of the church as the invisible temple in 11:1. But remember that the physical side of the church’s temple—our physical existence—is not protected in this age, since we must witness by sacrificing our bodies in various ways (see on 11:2). In what ways are we willing to sacrifice ourselves to witness to Christ in order that others may come into a secure relationship with God? When the time of witness is over in the final new cosmos, both our spirits and our bodies will be finally protected forever, which is pictured in this passage and is our hope.

The material of the city: God’s permanent presence guarantees the perfected security of the redeemed community and causes it to reflect His glory (21:18–21)

18–20 Now follows a description of the material which composes the city wall and its foundations and gates, as well as a parenthetical comment about the material of the entire city itself. The figurative description continues to emphasize the truth presented in vv. 12–17: the entire people of God redeemed throughout the ages will experience complete security in the new creation because of God’s perfect and consummate presence there. The city represents the fellowship of God’s people with His everlasting presence (see on 3:12; 11:1–2; 21:2–7, 9–17; note Isa. 52:1ff.; 62:1–5; Ezek. 48:35; Zech. 1:16; 2:2–5), and the wall (see on v. 12) represents the secure boundaries He has placed around this fellowship. The statement that **the city was pure gold, like clear glass** points back to the description in v. 11 of the city as shining like crystal with God’s glory. The city is made of pure gold (v. 18), like Solomon’s temple, which was overlaid with gold (1 Kgs. 6:20–22). Use of precious stones in 4:3 (especially jasper; cf. v. 11) to portray the divine glory points to the same use here. The material of the wall thus reflects the glory of God’s holiness.

The wall’s foundation stones **were adorned with every kind of precious stone**. This develops the theme of the bride’s adornment introduced in v. 2. The list of the twelve jewels is based on the twelve stones in the high priest’s breastpiece of judgment (Exod. 28:17–20; 39:8–14). Eight of the stones in the Exodus lists are repeated here, and the others are rough equivalents. Written on each stone of the breastpiece was the name of one of the twelve tribes (Exod. 28:21; 39:14), so that when the priest entered the temple to perform his duties, he represented all the tribes of Israel. The vision of Rev. 21:19–20 thus applies to the foundation stones of the new city-temple the jewels representing the tribes

of Israel in Exodus. This means that the tribes of Israel, God's preeminent people in the OT, are being equated with the apostles as the foundation of the new city-temple, since the names of the twelve apostles are written on those foundations (v. 14). The apostles are thus the paramount representatives of true, end-time Israel, the church (see on v. 14).

The jewels of Aaron's breastpiece are transferred to the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem because the breastpiece was meant to be a miniature version or replica of the Holy of Holies, being made of the same colored material and in the same square shape. The Holy of Holies was itself constructed on the pattern of the heavenly Holy of Holies (Exod. 25:40; Heb. 8:5). Strikingly, 1 Pet. 2:5 also affirms that believers, even in this age, are simultaneously building stones, a temple, and priests: "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood." It is not coincidental that already in v. 16 there has been an echo of the Holy of Holies described in 1 Kgs. 6:20, where the length, width, and height of the Holy of Holies are equal in measurement (the arrangement of the jewels along a quadrangle in connection with the four points of the compass suggests that they symbolized in a foreshadowing manner the glory of the entire new creation). A similar logic based on the description of the precious stones of the breastpiece in Exod. 28:17–20 likely lies behind the establishing of the foundations of Solomon's temple complex with large precious stones, a depiction which, together with Exodus 28 and Ezekiel 40–48, also forms part of the model for Rev. 21:18–20 (see 1 Kgs. 5:17; 7:9–10). In this respect, it is relevant to note that the precious stones of the upper part of the temple in 1 Kings 7 form four rows together with the sculptured cedar, which is similar to the four rows of stones in Exodus 28. The latter temple of the new world will be eternally secure and even more glorious than the former temple of the old world, which did not last.

The precious stones appear in fact to compose the foundations (**The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire ...**), which fits nicely with the parallel in v. 21 that "each one of the gates was a single pearl." This is supported by the parallel in Isa. 54:11–12, "Your foundations I will lay in sapphires.... I will make your battlements of rubies ... and your entire wall of precious stones." The precious stones of Isaiah's city are metaphorical for the presence of God yielding permanent peace, which the people inhabiting the latter-day Jerusalem will experience, as the context in Isa. 54:11–17 indicates. Isa. 54:4–8 refers to Israel as a wife who in the end times will be restored to the Lord as her husband, just as Rev. 19:7–9 and 21:2 picture the church as an end-time bride. In the light of Isaiah 54, the precious stones, together with the foundation, wall, and gates of the city in Revelation 21, are best seen as symbolizing the permanent safety of God's people together with God's glorious presence (e.g., vv. 2–4, 10–11, 18–23).

Both Exodus and Isaiah link God's glory with the precious stones, so that it may be deduced that one of the purposes of the variously colored precious stones in this section (e.g., vv. 11, 23; 22:5) is to reflect the luminous divine glory. 4:3, 9–11 confirms this, where three of the precious stones are mentioned and their significance is directly linked with emphasizing God's glory. The meaning of such metaphors in ch. 21 is that the saints are qualified to be in God's glorious presence, which protects them forever because God is

incorruptible. The stones also indicate that 21:1–22:5 portrays the institution of a new creation like the first creation preceding the sin of humanity, since some of the same stones were found in the garden of that first creation.

Also relevant to the imagery of vv. 18–21 is the similar portrayal in Ezek. 28:13 of Adam (figuratively compared to the king of Tyre) as a beautiful, perfect being:

You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Every precious stone was your covering:

The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;

The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;

The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;

And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,

Was in you.

Ezekiel 28 more directly inspired the picture of the harlot Babylon in 18:16, which is contrasted with the holy bride here (see on 18:16). The idea is that though what was fallen in Adam remains (in the person of the harlot), God has by contrast restored a people for Himself to complete the mandate Adam failed to fulfill. The new Jerusalem is thus a restoration of God's original creation. If the king of Tyre's former privileged position and subsequent fall is described with the imagery of Adam's blessed state and subsequent fall, it is unlikely to be coincidental that the bride in ch. 21 is described as a building adorned with precious stones. In Ezek. 28:12–16, the stones are inextricably linked with perfect righteousness, a likely connotation also of the stones in ch. 21, which is confirmed from the fact that v. 27 highlights that no uncleanness and sin will be allowed into the new Jerusalem, in fulfillment of OT prophecy (Isa. 52:1; 60:20–21; Ezek. 44:9; Zech. 14:21).

21 Each one of the gates was a single pearl. The twelve gates, like the twelve foundation stones, are drawn from the OT language of the twelve tribes of Israel and here represent the latter-day people of God, the church. The language is again figurative, for it is hard to conceive of a pearl big enough to be a gate proportional to a wall approximately two hundred and sixteen feet high. Just as the “city was pure gold, like clear glass” (v. 18), so also **the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.** This emphasizes further the similar feature in v. 18; the words **pure** (Greek *katharos*) and **transparent** (Greek *diagēs*) underscore the city's ability to reflect the luminous glory of God. The phrase **the street of the city** occurs elsewhere in the book only in 11:8 (“the street of the great city”), where it is the place the bodies of the witnesses lay. The point of repeating it here is to underscore that the street where the witnessing community was portrayed as slain is replaced by the street where they are to be glorified (so likewise “street” in 22:2). The addition of **pure gold, like transparent glass** probably highlights further that the

apparently inglorious path they trod in the old city has been transformed into a dazzlingly glorious one in the new city.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 21:18–21

On the significance of the materials of the city. The presentation of the city as composed of precious stones reveals it to be the fulfillment of Aaron’s breastpiece and, in turn, of the end-time symbolism of the Holy of Holies (which the breastpiece represented). The Holy of Holies was the very place of God’s dwelling in the OT, a place which pointed to His cosmic dwelling in the final new creation. Whereas under the old covenant the presence of God was purely localized, it now extends throughout the new creation. In addition, allusion is also made to the portrayal by Ezekiel of Adam as the original bearer of the precious stones. Now Christ, the new Adam, through the church, fulfills the mandate of God to extend Eden where the first Adam failed. It is important to understand the significance of the material of the city in order to understand its nature and purpose.

The internal features of the city and its inhabitants: the glorious presence of God and the Lamb will elicit the response of praise by true believers in contrast to pseudo-believers, who will be excluded forever from God’s presence (21:22–27)

22 As with vv. 9–21, so vv. 22–27 amplify the initial vision of the new Jerusalem in vv. 1–8 and thus explain it further. The OT prophesied that a temple would be rebuilt along with the renovation of Jerusalem. However, John says **I saw no temple in it**. It is not that John saw no temple but only that he saw no physical or architectural temple. Rather, **the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple**. The end-time temple described by Ezekiel in four chapters (40–43) is now summarized and interpreted in this one phrase. Jeremiah prophesied that “they shall say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the Lord,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it” (Jer. 3:16–17). Haggai (2:9) prophesied that the latter glory of God’s house would be greater than the former, and Isaiah (65:17–25) spoke of God restoring Jerusalem within the setting of a new heavens and a new earth.

In light of this verse, John would probably have understood these OT prophecies as fulfilled in the future by God and Christ replacing the former physical temple and ark with their glorious habitation, which will make the glory of the former temple fade in comparison. This replacement was inaugurated with Christ’s first coming, when He referred to His own resurrection as the rebuilding of the temple (John 2:19–22; Mark 14:58; 15:29). Analogously Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10–11; Luke 20:17–18; and Acts 4:11 (“very corner stone”) picture Christ as the “chief corner stone” of the temple (cf. also Rom. 9:32–33), and Eph. 2:20 portrays Christ as the “corner stone” of the temple, which there represents the church. The inauguration is also hinted at in Rev. 1:12–20, where the resurrected Christ is the central feature of the heavenly temple scene (walking in the midst

of the temple-church lampstands). It is clear that this verse does not refer to a *literal* temple, whether the OT temple or a supposedly rebuilt end-time temple. In fact, the same is true elsewhere in Revelation. “Temple” (Greek *naos*) generally refers to the *heavenly* temple of the present: 7:15 (though there including the consummation); 14:15, 17; 15:5–6, 8; 16:1, 17. In 11:1–2, the “sanctuary” identifies the people of God who are already members of God’s temple in heaven even though still living on earth, yet still identified as “the temple of God.” “Temple” also refers to the temple of God’s presence which dominates the new age of the future (3:12; 7:15; 11:19). Indeed, the only other use of the actual phrase “temple of God” outside 11:1 appears in 11:19, with reference to the end-time *heavenly* temple, which is the same reality that protected believers during their sojourn on earth. Believers dwelling in the final form of God’s temple, as depicted here in 21:10–22, will be protected forever from every kind of danger. In this light, Christ’s earlier promise to each overcomer in 3:12 that He will make him “a pillar in the temple of My God” might better be translated “a pillar in the temple *that is My God*” (appositional genitive).

The equation of God and the Lamb with the temple correlates well with our earlier figurative equation of redeemed saints with the new Jerusalem and its foundations, gates, and wall. Throughout 21:9–22:5 John excludes most of the detailed descriptions of the Ezekiel 40–48 temple and its ordinances because he understands it as fulfilled in God’s and Christ’s presence rather than in the form of a physical and localized structure. This expectation of a non-architectural temple is, for the most part, a break with Judaism, which consistently affirmed the hope of a final, material temple structure on a scale greater than any before.

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it. John continues to speak figuratively. There may or may not be a literal sun and moon in the new cosmos, but the point here is that God’s glory is incomparable in relation to any light-giving sources, whether in the old or new creation. God’s glory is sufficient to make the city (= the saints) resplendent. The wording of the entire verse is based directly on Isa. 60:19: “No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory.” The reason (**for**) the city of John’s vision did not need the luminaries is that **the glory of God has illumined it, and that its lamp is the Lamb.** John substitutes for Isaiah’s last phrase about the glory of God **its lamp is the Lamb**, thus underlining the deity of the Lamb alongside that of God. In the new creation, God’s presence alone is what beautifies God’s people and satisfies their every need. This is also a fulfillment of Ezek. 43:2, 5, where the prophet sees from the vantage point of the future that “the earth shone with his glory” and that “the glory of the Lord filled the house” (= the temple).

24–26 The allusions to Isaiah 60 continue in these verses:

“And nations will come to your light, and **And the nations shall walk by its light**, kings to the brightness of your rising....**and the kings of the earth shall bring** The wealth of the nations will come to

you” (Isa. 60:3, 5).

their glory into it (v. 24).

“And your gates will be open continually; **And in the daytime (for there shall be they will not be closed day or night, so no night there) its gates shall never be that men may bring to you the wealth of closed; and they shall bring the glory the nations, with their kings led in and the honor of the nations into it** (vv. procession” (Isa. 60:11). 25–26).

Isaiah 60 develops further Isa. 2:2, 5 (which also stands in the background of v. 24): “all the nations will stream” to Zion and devout Israelites will “walk in the light of the Lord.” John sees that the pilgrimage of the nations to latter-day Jerusalem, which Isaiah foresaw, will in fact take place in the future new Jerusalem, which lies in view before his own eyes. The phrase **the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it** must be interpreted from the Isaiah background. Isa. 60:5–14 and 61:4–6 speak of the kings bringing their literal physical power and wealth to Israel. However, Isaiah 60 and its context portray the nations not merely bringing literal treasures to Israel, but also bringing themselves as worshipers of God. Isa. 60:6b says the nations will not only “bring gold and frankincense,” but also “will bear good news of the praises of the Lord,” as opposed to other rebellious nations which will perish (60:12). Similarly, Isa. 49:6 speaks of Israel as God’s light to the nations and of His salvation, which will reach to the ends of the earth. Isa. 66:12 speaks of the glory of the nations coming to Israel as an overflowing stream, as God extends peace to her like a river. The glory spoken of in Rev. 21:24–26 focuses not on the literal wealth of nations, but is grounded in Isaiah’s picture of glory in the form of praise arising to God from the nations, which then results in Israel’s peace with them. Presumably, this refers to those formerly antagonistic but subsequently redeemed from among the nations who will submit to God, praise Him, and so become unified with redeemed Israel (see for instance Isa. 11:6–12).

Therefore, the reason that vv. 24–26 refer to the nations bringing glory and honor into the city is to highlight the fact that they are bringing not literal riches, but themselves as worshipers before God’s end-time presence (so vv. 3–5). The **glory and honor of the nations** is grammatically a Greek genitive of source, meaning the glory and honor *arising from the nations*, and directed as praise toward God and the Lamb. This interpretation is supported by the observation that the phrase “glory and honor” (or “honor and glory”) appears elsewhere in the book only in 4:9, 11 and 5:12, 13, where it refers without exception to praise of God and the Lamb. All the redeemed can bring into the new creation is their righteous acts (14:13; 19:8), which they continue to perform by praising God. It is these very righteous acts which reflect the divine glory, as a comparison of 19:7–8 with

21:2–8 and 21:9–27 reveals; only that which is clean and holy and thus reflects the glory of God will be admitted to the new Jerusalem. In support of this interpretation is Isa. 49:17–18 (a chapter already alluded to in v. 6), where those who enter Jerusalem are compared to “jewels” adorning a “bride”; the Septuagint identifies some of these people who will enter as Gentiles. Jewels, like the precious stones of the preceding verses, both reflect and represent the glory of God. Therefore, the nations no longer claim glory for themselves independently from God, as they formerly did in idolatrous allegiance to the beast, but acknowledge that all honor and glory belong only to God. There is a subtle contrast here with the kings of the old earth who brought their wealth into Babylon (ch. 18). The portrayal here is metaphorical; the depiction is that of nations now bringing everything they possess to God. The picture of riches signifies the absolute, wholehearted subservience of the nations to God.

The fact that the gates **shall never be closed** is underlined by the phrase **for there shall be no night there**, where “for” (Greek *gar*) is better rendered more emphatically as “indeed.” The absence of night emphasizes the fact that the redeemed will be unhindered in having access to God’s glorious presence. God’s presence does not fully dwell in the fallen creation because evil resides there. The divine glory is now completely manifested, because there will be no more darkness or evil in the new world (cf. 22:5 for a fuller statement of the same truth). The statement is identical in meaning to the introductory expressions in vv. 1, 4 (“there is no longer any sea ... there shall no longer be any death ... any mourning, or crying, or pain”) and to the concluding statements in 22:3 (“there shall no longer be any curse”) and 22:5 (“there shall no longer be any night”).

The nations and the kings of the earth likely include some who had persecuted God’s people (for the former cf. 11:2; 18:3, 23; 19:15; for the latter cf. 1:5; 17:2, 18; 18:3). If so, they subsequently repented and will be allowed entrance to the city. The “nations” are twice seen in the book as composing the company of the redeemed (5:9; 7:9), and those mentioned here are presumably the same group. They are best identified with those in 5:9–10 who were purchased “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,” were made a kingdom, and reigned as kings throughout the church age (see on 5:9–10; 7:9 as well as on 1:5–6 and 20:4–6 for the concept of reigning in the church age). Converted kings are the subject, since the phrase “kings of the earth” is an expansion of “kings” from Isa. 60:3, 11 (see above).

Therefore, the perpetually open gates and the apparent ceaseless pilgrimage of Gentiles into the city throughout eternity are not intended to be understood literally, since it would not take a finite number of Gentiles an infinite eternity to enter the new Jerusalem. Likewise, there is no basis for seeing the entrance of the nations and kings into the city as suggesting a kind of universalism wherein non-elect peoples whose names are not written in the book of the Lamb will enter the new Jerusalem. Only the elect will come into the city, which is indicated by v. 27b, where the phrase “those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” clearly has its antecedent in the nations and kings who enter the city in vv. 24–26. Neither can the portrayal refer to some kind of deliverance from the lake of fire,

since Revelation elsewhere views followers of the beast as suffering that punishment for eternity and not temporarily (cf. 14:10–11 and 20:10 with 21:8, 27; 22:14–15). This is supported by 22:11, which also contrasts ungodly people with godly people and views each as essentially permanently set in their respective ways. Furthermore, 22:18–19 speaks of the judgment of the impious in definitive and absolute terms.

In the light of the above analysis, it would be wrong to think that vv. 24–26 contains a literal depiction of nations residing outside the newly created city (or a millennial city on the first earth), in which redeemed Israelites already dwell, and then streaming in to join the Israelites. Though Isaiah 60 could be read this way, it is better to see John's use of the OT as emphasizing the consummated redemption of those from among the nations, which will happen simultaneously with the final redemption of Jewish Christians. Prophecy portrays the future with language which is understandable to the prophet and his contemporary readership. The prophetic language of Isaiah employs imagery corresponding to the social and cultural realities of his own day, which he could understand, to describe realities of the new creation that were to be fulfilled in ways he probably could not have fully imagined.

Bringing glory into the city in vv. 24 and 26 is spatial language, but it conveys a non-spatial notion. This is supported by recalling that the dimensions of the city in vv. 15–17 are spatial, but the meaning conveyed is non-spatial. Consequently, it would be incorrect to infer that the picture of people making a pilgrimage into the new Jerusalem means that there is a literal pilgrimage from outer spaces into the city's inner space. The point of the figurative picture is that the believing Gentiles will never be separated from open, eternal access to God's presence and that nothing evil can threaten such access. Whereas in the old world the gates of Jerusalem, and of all ancient cities, had to be closed at night to protect the inhabitants from unexpected intruders, the new city faces no such danger. Though direct entrance by humans to the tree of life was blocked by angelic beings throughout history (Gen. 3:24), at the end of history angels stand guard to ensure that people retain free access (22:14).

Finally, those who walk in the city's light are not separate in identification from the city itself, just as the woman and her children of ch. 12 were but different metaphorical ways of referring to the same reality of God's people. Likewise, the saints are pictured as the bride at the marriage feast, but also as invited guests (19:7–9). The cartoon poster of Uncle Sam portrayed him inviting Americans to enlist during the two world wars, yet he himself was America. Symbolism allows for such overlaps of identification.

27 Those not submissive to God will never enter the city of His presence: **nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it.** This is the same group referred to in v. 8; the word **unclean** is added to stress the sin of idolatry and unfaithfulness to God (for the identification of abomination and uncleanness with idolatry see on 17:4–5). Included among these are people who may never have had association with the church, but the focus is on those who made profession of faith but

contradicted it by their sinful lifestyles, which was the telltale sign that they were pseudo-believers and “liars” (see on v. 8). Those allowed to enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. The phrase “book of life” appears five times outside v. 27 (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15). In each case, as here, it is a metaphor referring to the elect saints, whose salvation has been determined and secured. Their names have been entered into the census book of the eternal new Jerusalem before history began. This alludes partly to Isa. 4:3: “he who is left ... in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.”

The **book** then is a picture of security in God’s eternal city, and the phrase **of life** clarifies what kind of security is provided. Their names were **written in the Lamb’s book of life** before the creation, which means that they were identified at that time as ones who would benefit from the Lamb’s redemptive death. Therefore, they have been given the protection of eternal **life**, which comes as a result of the Lamb’s death and His resurrection life. This prehistorical identification with the Lamb has protected them from the deceptions of the world which threaten to suppress their trust in the Lamb, and has enabled them to be ready to enter the gates of the city to enjoy the life for which they were destined (see on 13:8b for discussion of the phrase there, “written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb”; see further also on 3:5).

The rhetorical situation must be kept in mind. John’s intent in v. 27 is not merely to give information about future destinies, but to warn people in the churches at the time (and thus subsequently) by describing the final outcome of their choices and actions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 21:22–27

On the development in Scripture of the concept of the temple and its implications for us as believers living in the presence of God. The commentary presents the development of the biblical concept of the temple. In the OT, the temple was a physical reality. Christ refers to His body as a new temple. Believers are then referred to as a new temple, with Christ as the chief cornerstone. Finally, in these verses, the final form of the eternal temple is constituted by the presence of God in the midst of His people gathered from every nation. What links all this together is the presence of God. If that is the case, what are the implications for us as believers living in an inaugurated, but not fulfilled, spiritual temple? Are we aware of the presence of God in our midst? What does this mean for our understanding of the need for personal and corporate holiness? Do we truly conduct our daily lives as if we were living in His presence? How can this encourage us in the practice of prayer?

The garden, the river, and the inhabitants and luminary of the city: the consummate, glorious presence of God with His people ensures the eternal absence of any curse and establishes their everlasting roles of priests and kings in praising and reflecting His glory (22:1–5)

1–2a Rev. 22:1–5 is the conclusion to all of ch. 21, and it continues the photographic

blowup of the new Jerusalem in 21:9–27 with a last expanded view of the new Jerusalem, which was introduced in 21:1–7. The opening verse of ch. 22, **And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb** combines the prophetic picture of a spring or river of living water flowing out of latter-day Jerusalem and its temple, which appears respectively in Zech. 14:8 and Ezek. 47:1–9; see likewise Joel 3:18 (“a spring will go out from the house of the Lord”). Ezek. 47:9 even speaks of the life-giving property of the water: “so everything will live where the river goes.” But these verses reach even further back to the description of the primeval garden in Gen. 2:10: “a river flowed out of Eden.” In association with the first Eden’s river, the “gold ... the bdellium and the onyx stone” (Gen. 2:12) were features around one of the river’s tributaries, which compares to the precious stones (cf. 21:18–20) surrounding the river of v. 1 (the **river of the water of life**). The **water of life** (which could also be translated “waters which are life” or “living waters”) pictures eternal life (so v. 17) and has its origin in God and the Lamb, as the concluding clause (v. 1b) bears out.

As in Ezekiel 47, the living water flows from the temple, though now God and the Lamb are the temple (21:22). Though the Holy Spirit may be in mind (cf. John 7:37–39; see also Ezek. 36:25–27 and John 4:10–24), the water metaphor primarily represents the life of eternal fellowship with God and Christ, which is borne out by the way vv. 3–5 develop vv. 1–2. That the river is pure and the water **clear as crystal** indicates the purifying nature of the water. The water purifies people’s sins, so that they may enter into the intimate presence of God, as portrayed in vv. 3–5 (so similarly vv. 14, 17). That the river flows down **the middle of its street** shows that the imparting of eternal fellowship with God is at the heart of the city’s significance. The tree(s) of v. 2b (on which see below) then follow the pattern of Ezek. 47:12: “And by the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food.” There is also a similarity to the prophecy of latter-day Zion in Isa. 35:6–10: “For waters will break forth in the wilderness ... the scorched land will become like a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water ... and a highway will be there ... and it will be called the Highway of Holiness ... the unclean will not travel on it ... but the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return, and come with joyful shouting to Zion ... and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” In addition to the unusual combination of the water metaphor with urban road portrayals, note the references to the unclean (cf. Rev. 21:27) and the return of the ransomed to Zion (cf. 21:3), where there will be no more sorrow (cf. 21:4; 22:3). The picture of the nations advancing on the city’s main street may imply that they wade in the life-giving waters as they walk, just as Ezekiel did in his prophetic vision of the end-time temple (Ezek. 47:3–4).

2b And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. The scene is based on Ezek. 47:12 (see above), which itself is modeled partly on the garden and river of Gen. 2:9–10, so that both Ezekiel and Revelation envision an escalated reestablishment of the Garden of the first creation, in which God’s presence openly dwelled. Even the decorative palm trees and cherubim portrayed as part of Ezekiel’s temple (41:18–26) allude to the garden setting of Eden. The depiction in Ezekiel’s temple

was anticipated earlier in the Solomonic temple, which also included carvings of flowers (e.g., 1 Kgs. 6:18, 29, 32, 35; 7:18ff.). The allusion to Ezek. 47:12 supports a picture of trees growing on either side of the river, so that the singular “tree” of v. 2 is likely a collective reference to trees. And in any event, how could one tree grow on either side of the river? The absence of the article “the” (which would underline that a singular particular tree was being referred to) may point further to a collective meaning. The one tree of life in the first garden has become many trees of life in the escalated paradisaal state of the second garden. But since these trees are all of the same kind as the original tree, they can be referred to from the perspective of their corporate unity as “*the* tree of life” (so Rev. 2:7), just as we might refer to a grove full of oaks as an oak grove. Interestingly, some passages in Jewish literature maintained a tension between an expectation of a singular tree of life and the plural trees of Ezekiel 47 (cf. *Tanhuma* Genesis, Parashah 1.18; *Tanna de-be Eliyyahu Rabbah* 93). Another feature of escalation is that, whereas the original paradise was only a small geographical part of the earthly creation, now the paradisaal temple encompasses the entire geography of the new creation.

The living waters impart life because they come from God’s presence, drawing His people into intimate communion with Him. The river of Ezek. 47:8–9, 12 heals and brings life to the world around it. The imagery of the river in Ezekiel 47 appears to fit into such a figurative portrayal, since similar OT imagery of restored Zion clearly employs water figuratively to signify the renewed life of the saints in their final reunion with God; cf. Isa. 35:6–9 (see above on vv. 1–2a) and Joel 3:18: “all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the Lord” (so likewise Isa. 41:17–20; 43:18–21).

The reference to the **tree of life** also shows that John understood the foreseen flourishing of the new cosmos in Ezek. 47:12 as the reestablishment of an eternal Eden (an escalated form of the original Eden, since it will be eternally incorruptible). Gen. 3:22, 24 refers to the tree of life: if Adam had been able to eat from it, he would have been able to live forever. Presumably, the tree there represented the presence of God, which could impart eternal life to all who would be able to enter into it.

The medicinal effects of the water and of the leaves of the tree that it nourishes here are not limited to the natural realm, nor even to privileged ethnic Israel, but are for all peoples throughout the world who have believed the gospel: **the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations**. Outside chs. 21–22, the only clear references to the “nations” as God’s people occur in 5:9 and 7:9 (see also on 21:24–26 above). 5:9 explains best the meaning of the nations’ “healing.” The figurative picture of being healed by the leaves of the tree of life means that Christ was slain on behalf of the believing nations, so that they were released from the penal curse of their sins by His blood (cf. 5:9 with 1:5). Christ suffered death on their behalf in the present age, so that they would not have to suffer it in the age to come. Does the tree’s fruit continue to heal throughout eternity even as it continues to produce fruit? The answer must be negative, since there will be no more death or pain to be healed from in the new creation (21:4). Just as the tears which God will wipe away do not refer to pains being endured throughout eternity, but rather describe a once for all

relief from such pains (see 21:4; 7:16–17), so it is here. This shows another aspect of this escalation of Eden. John uses the imagery of Ezek. 47:12 to describe eternal realities beyond his comprehension. The tree could not literally yield fruit **every month**, for the very timing depends on a calendar based on solar days and lunar months, whereas there is no sun or moon in the new creation (21:23; 22:5). A total of twelve months of fruit-bearing, together with **twelve kinds of fruit**, reinforces the repeated multiples of twelve already used in the vision to highlight the fullness of redemptive provision and to link it with the number representing the fullness of God’s people who benefit from it.

The worldwide extent of the paradisaal city-temple

The city-temple revealed in chs. 21–22 encompasses the entirety of the newly created earth. Three reasons can be given:

Isa. 54:2–3 suggest the notion of an escalated new Jerusalem or end-time temple spreading out to the nations.

Uncleanness was to be kept out of the OT temple precincts, and 21:27 and 22:15 make it clear that uncleanness is to be kept out of the entire new creation.

John says in 21:1 that he saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” and then in 21:2 and 21:9–22:5, he sees only a paradisaal city-temple.

The new heaven and earth and the garden-city-temple probably interpret one another and refer to the same reality of the entire new heavens and earth. Isa. 65:17–18 (v. 17 is alluded to in Rev. 21:1) seem to equate the new heavens and earth with the renewed city of Jerusalem.

The basis for the world-encompassing nature of the new city-temple lies in the OT concept that the temple was a microcosmic model for the entire heaven and earth; cf. Ps. 78:69: “And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has founded forever.” The jewels on the high priest’s breastpiece, which were a small replica of the Holy of Holies, also symbolized the earthly or heavenly cosmos by pointing back to the stones of the original creation. The same jewels are now part of the new city-temple in ch. 21 (see on 21:18–20). The OT temple was the localized dwelling of God’s presence on earth. In that it was meant to be a symbolic reflection of the creation as a whole, it pointed to the end-time goal of God’s tabernacling throughout the whole creation, a theme that Rev. 21:1–22:5 seems to be developing.

At the same time, the idea of the new city-temple is related not only to the old temple, but (as is indicated by the presence of the precious stones) can be traced back to the Garden. There are indeed hints that the Garden of Eden was the archetypal temple in which the first man worshiped God:

Eden was where Adam walked and talked with God, as did the priests in the temple.

In Gen. 2:15 God places Adam in the Garden to “cultivate” it and “keep” it. These two verbs (Hebrew *abad* and *šamar*) and their cognate nouns are also used of priests keeping the service of the tabernacle (Num. 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chron. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14). Adam is thus presented as the archetypal priest who serves in and guards God’s first temple.

When Adam failed in his duty and was expelled from the Garden, two cherubim took over his priestly role: they “guarded” the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). The same cherubim reappear guarding the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies.

The tree of life was probably the model for the lampstand placed directly outside the Holy of Holies.

That the Garden was the first temple is also suggested by the wood and stone carvings that gave the temple a garden-like appearance (1 Kgs. 6:18, 29, 32, 35; 7:18–20).

The entrance to Eden was from the east, which was also the direction from which one entered the tabernacle and the later temples of Israel.

Not only was Adam to guard the temple, he was to subdue and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). It is plausible to suggest he was to extend the boundaries of the Garden until it extended throughout the whole earth. What he failed to do, Revelation presents Christ as having finally done. The Edenic imagery beginning in 22:1 reflects an intention to show that the building of the temple, which began in Genesis 2, will be completed in Christ and His people and will encompass the whole new creation.

3 V. 3 further explains the statement in v. 2 concerning the “healing of the nations.” First, **there shall no longer be any curse**. The phrase is taken from Zech. 14:11. The “curse” (Hebrew *herem*) referred to people being put under a ban for complete destruction because of their sin. In the time of Zechariah, Jerusalem had suffered such destruction, though not completely. There will yet be, according to Zechariah, a final onslaught of the nations against Jerusalem to purify her from a segment of impure inhabitants (Zech. 14:2–3). But after that attack, a future time will come when purified Jerusalem will never again be threatened by the curse of destruction for her sin: “people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security” (14:11). The curse instead will come on the attackers (14:12–15). While those inhabiting the new Jerusalem will be immune from the curse, those kept outside will suffer it, part of the effect of which is eternal separation from the benefits of God’s presence (so Rev. 21:8; also 21:27; 22:15). The inhabitants of the eternal city are able to dwell there because they have been delivered and definitively “healed” from the final curse because the Lamb suffered that punishment on their behalf (see on 21:27b; 22:2). The curse of physical and spiritual death set on the human race by Adam in the first garden is permanently removed by the Lamb in the last garden at the time of the new creation. In primeval time, humanity was expelled from the

garden sanctuary, and its entrance thereafter closed to sinful humanity. At the end time, the redeemed will be ushered into the opened gates of that sanctuary again as a result of the Lamb's work.

The various physical sufferings and sorrows associated with the fallen condition of humanity, to which even the redeemed are susceptible, will be entirely removed and no longer pose a threat in the new order. This means that the saints will not only be free from the danger of being separated from God, but they will be secure from the *entire range* of persecutions and afflictions threatening them in the former world (note the phrase **any**, literally "all" or "every," **curse**). Therefore, the removal of the curse includes elimination of both physical and spiritual evils.

There will be no form of curse in the new Jerusalem because God's consummate ruling presence will fill it: **the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it**. There is only one throne, as is clear from 3:21: "I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne" (similarly 5:11–13; 7:17). All who enter the city have access to the presence of God and the Lamb. They respond to His blessing in service: **and His bondservants shall serve Him**. The observation that in 7:15 the saints "serve" (Greek *latreuō*) God as priests in His heavenly temple shows that here also they are performing priestly service in the temple of the end-time city. This echoes the prophecy of Isa. 61:6 ("you will be called the priests of the Lord ... ministers of our God"), which will be fulfilled in the new cosmic temple. That Isa. 61:6 is in mind is evident if we recall that allusions to Isaiah have been woven throughout Rev. 21:1–22:5 (especially note Isa. 61:10 in 21:2 and allusions to Isaiah 60 in 21:23–26 and 22:5). The saints' service is to God and the Lamb. That both are sitting on only one throne and together form one temple (21:22) enhances their perceived unity. This unity is also highlighted in that both carry the title "Alpha and Omega" (1:8; 21:6; 22:13). Such statements as these in 21:22 and 22:3 were among those which gave rise to later Trinitarian formulas.

4 In the old creation, God's presence was primarily located in Israel's temple, as well as, of course, in heaven. Christians had access to the Spirit's presence, but the fullness of the special revelatory presence of the Trinity was not yet revealed. Now the divine presence fully permeates the new Jerusalem, the eternal temple and dwelling place of the saints, since **they shall see His face**, a hope expressed by OT saints (Pss. 11:4–7; 27:4; cf. Ps. 42:1–2). The whole community are priests privileged to see God's face in the new Holy of Holies, which encompasses the entire paradisaical city-temple, that is, the entire new creation.

The assertion that **His name shall be on their foreheads** intensifies the notion of intimate fellowship with God. It is beyond coincidence that God's name was written on the high priest's forehead in the OT ("Holy to the Lord": Exod. 28:36–38). The high priest represented Israel and was consecrated to God so that he could enter into God's presence in the Holy of Holies to offer propitiatory sacrifices on Israel's behalf, in order to make the people acceptable before God and so that they would not incur His wrath. As was the case with the high priest's jewels in Exod. 28:17–21 (see on 21:18–20), so in v. 4 the privilege of

being consecrated to be acceptable in the immediate presence of God, formerly reserved only for the high priest, is now granted to all of God's people. This expresses further the priestly nature of God's new people.

For further OT background of the idea of the **name** here, we can note that the idea of a new name in Isaiah 62 is repeatedly associated with latter-day Zion and that the various new names attributed to the end-time city there all have "God" included in them. The name of God here and elsewhere in Revelation (see on 2:17 and 3:12; cf. also 14:1) indicates the security of the believer and his or her place in God's eternal city. In 3:12, Christ emphasizes the nuance of security by saying that He will write on the overcomer "the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God ... and My new name," and metaphorically equates this with making the one "who overcomes" an immovable "pillar in the temple of My God." The theme of security associated with the figurative use of God's name elsewhere in the book fits neatly into the theme of the eternal security of the saints in the new Jerusalem narrated so far. We have also seen that the name written on believers refers to the character of God, which they reflect (see on 2:17). Therefore, at the end of time the righteous "shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2; cf. Job 19:25–27; Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:12), a process which has already begun (2 Cor. 3:18).

5 The vision ends with an expression, **there shall no longer be**, similar to those with which it began in 21:1, 4. This highlights one final time the overall point of the vision, that the saints will not only be free from the danger of being separated from God, but will be secure from the entire range of sufferings threatening them in the old world, which had to be removed before the end-time revelatory fullness of God could be manifested. The affirmation that **they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them** fulfills the prophecy of Isa. 60:19–20: "No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory. Your sun will set no more ... and the days of your mourning will be finished." This continues the thought of 21:23, which also alluded to Isa. 60:19. There, the city had "no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it," for the glory of God and the Lamb illumined it.

The language in v. 5 is figurative, and the main point is that nothing from the old world will be able to hinder God's glorious presence from completely filling the new cosmos or the saints from unceasing access to that divine presence. Thus is answered consummately the prayer of the OT saints (Num. 6:25–26; Pss. 4:6; 31:16; 67:1) that the Lord would shine the light of His countenance upon them. Uppermost in thought is the blessing of Num. 6:25–27, since there the shining of God's face is to result in preservation and peace for the saints, which is equated with the Aaronic blessing of invoking God's name "on the sons of Israel" in connection to the temple (Num. 6:27).

The role of God's people as "lampstands" bearing the light of the divine lamp will finally be perfected (cf. 1:20 with 1:4 and 4:5, as well as with 21:11–26 and 22:5). The clouds, the night, and the dark shadows of the old world will no longer be able to diminish Christ's

light through the “lampstands,” but He will shine as the “lamp” of the new world in an unlimited manner (so 21:23).

It is not coincidental that v. 4 has also referred to the divine name on Aaron’s forehead and applied it to all of God’s people as His priests. The “age-long benediction” of Numbers 6 reaches its fullest possible application in the new world. In the old covenant, such a revelation of God’s face would have brought death (Exod. 33:20), but now it is the means of eternal life and kingship. The role of kingship is appended to priestly functions, because Adam had such a dual role and failed and because the Messiah Himself was finally to fulfill this dual role. The saints are so identified with the throne of the Messiah that they are identified with both His priestly and kingly roles (see further on 20:5–6). The saints exercise sovereignty over the new creation in a way similar to how Adam was to rule “over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28; see Psalm 8). Part of the purpose of Christ fulfilling the role of the last Adam is, in corporate solidarity with His people, to rule over the eternal new creation, which includes the holy angels (Heb. 2:5–16), who are designed merely to be servants of the redeemed (Heb. 1:14; also perhaps indicated by the position of angels as gatekeepers in Rev. 21:12). However, exalted believers *are* different from the first Adam in that, whereas God only commissioned Adam to rule (a commission he failed to fulfill), now God *promises* that His people *will certainly* reign without end.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 22:1–5

On the development of the worldwide paradisaical city-temple and our role as priests in it. The commentary traces the development of the extent of the temple from the Garden to the new Jerusalem. How helpful is this in developing your understanding of one of the main “story lines” of the Bible? Would you concur with the way the commentary links the precious stones of the Garden, the high priest, and the eternal city? Would you agree with its portrayal of the idea of priesthood throughout the Bible? What does it mean to be admitted as a priest today to God’s temple, as it exists in the form of the church? If Adam was a priest who failed in his duty, and Christ was the Priest who succeeded, how do we, as Christ’s servants, function as priests in the inaugurated temple of the church? Adam and Eve failed as priests because they did not sufficiently recall God’s word when challenged by the serpent. Compare God’s word in Gen. 2:16–17 with Eve’s quotation of it in Gen. 3:2–3. How did Eve get it wrong? Adam and Eve also failed because they let uncleanness (the serpent) come into their sanctuary. What uncleanness is in our lives, or threatens to come and defile us? What is our role in extending the boundaries of the temple in this age? What does it mean to extend those boundaries and how does this relate to Christian witness? How far will the boundaries reach in the age before Christ returns?

The purpose of the 21:1–22:5 vision

This vision sets the two cities of Revelation—earthly Babylon and the eternal Jerusalem—in sharp opposition to one another. The same phrase is used to introduce both

cities (17:1 and 21:9). Both have a street (11:8 and 21:21). Babylon is impure (17:4), but Jerusalem is pure (21:21). Both are adorned with gold and precious stones (17:4; 18:16; 21:18–21). The superficial similarities between the two are not surprising, for throughout Revelation the forces of evil imitate those of good: there are false apostles (2:2), a false synagogue (2:9; 3:9), a false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10), and a Satanic figure with horns like a lamb (13:11), as opposed to Christ, a Lamb with horns (5:6). There is a threefold name for the beast (17:8, 10–11) and a threefold name for God (1:4, 8, etc.).

Some of the other contrasts observable in 21:1–22:5 between the harlot and the new Jerusalem have been discussed above (see on 21:9–10). In addition, note the following:

One is a pure bride (21:2, 9), the other a harlot (17:1–2; 18:9).

One does business with unrighteous kings and is attacked by them (17:16, 18), but the other receives the loyalty of righteous kings (21:24).

One receives extorted wealth (18:11–17), while the other receives the glory and honor of the nations (21:24–26).

Those inhabiting one are full of impurities (17:4–5; 18:2–3), while all such people are barred from the other (21:8, 27).

The one is full of slaughter and blood (17:6; 18:24), while the other is full of healing and life (22:1–2).

The saints are exhorted to flee one (18:4) but enter the other (22:14).

The sins of one are piled up to heaven (18:5), as she sought to link earth to heaven with self-glorifying pride (cf. Gen. 11:1–9), while the other comes down from heaven to link heaven with earth (21:2) and glorify God.

The one will be split into three parts and destroyed (16:17–19), whereas the other will remain forever (21:6–7), both events being introduced by “It is done.”

The two have contrasting names written on their foreheads (17:5; 22:4).

The names of their respective inhabitants are or are not written in the book of life (17:8; 21:27).

One glorifies herself (18:7), and the other reflects the glory of God (21:11, 23).

One becomes the dwelling place for demons (18:2), while the other becomes a dwelling place for God (21:3, 22).

The contrast is linked to the warning of 21:8, which is addressed to churches where the harlot has had her foothold. Furthermore, the depiction of the new city is replete with antitheses to the sinful churches of chs. 2–3; the perfections of the city are set over against

the imperfections of the churches in the letters.

The primary point of contrasting the harlot with the bride is to exhort the faltering churches, plagued by compromise with the harlot, to stop compromising, and increasingly to reflect facets of their coming consummated perfection, in anticipation of it. The portrayal of the new covenant, the new temple, the new Israel, and the new Jerusalem affirms the future fulfillment of the main prophetic themes of the OT and NT, all of which find their ultimate climax in the new creation. The kingdom of the new creation itself is the most overarching of biblical promises, of which the above four new things—covenant, temple, Israel, and Jerusalem—are but facets.

The prophetic vision in 21:1–22:5 of the perfected people of God in unending fellowship with Him is intended to comfort and motivate believers to persevere through temptations to compromise. John exhorts God’s people to remain faithful, which is his ultimate goal in writing. This is why the book concludes in 22:6–21 with an epilogue of repeated exhortations, promises, affirmations of Christ’s imminent coming, and warnings to the saints. The prospect of their final victory should motivate them to shun any thought of earthly compromise which would threaten possession of their eternal inheritance. The contrast between the present imperfections of the church, as stated in chs. 2 and 3, and its final glory, as described here, should cause them to cry out for a greater manifestation of God’s glory in their lives.

While the main *pastoral* goal of the book’s argument is to exhort God’s people to remain faithful so that they will inherit final salvation, this is not the most important *theological* idea in the book. The major theological theme of the book is that God should receive worship and glory as a result of accomplishing consummate salvation and final judgment (see on 4:11; 5:11–13; 19:1, 5, 7; cf. 1:6; 11:16–17). This notion of divine glory is central to 21:1–22:5 since, as we have seen, the new Jerusalem (or God’s people) can only be defined in relation to its luminescent reflection of God’s glory. Indeed, the central feature of the city is God and the Lamb, who shine as a lamp upon the city (21:22–23; 22:5), so that the more complete definition of the new Jerusalem includes God’s people in full fellowship with God and Christ, reflecting the glory of God and Christ.²

² Beale, G. K., & Campbell, D. H. (2015). *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (pp. 463–507). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.