

## Revelation 21:9-22:5 - The New Jerusalem

In Revelation 21:9 through Revelation 22:5, John zooms in on new creation. John will describe what he calls the “New Jerusalem”; however, the angel speaking with John makes it very clear that this is not an actual city, with buildings and gates and things you would expect in the city. The city is “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” In other words, this “city” is a spiritual metaphor for us, the church, which is the body of Christ.

John is taken in the Spirit to a high mountain where he sees the New Jerusalem coming out of heaven and landing on earth. The city has the glory of God depicted with gemstones. Recall that in Revelation 4, the one sitting on the throne was depicted with the appearance of gemstones. The imagery tells us that like John says in an earlier Epistle, we will be made like Him.

**1 John 3:2 (ESV):** 2 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

That we look like the One sitting on the throne is important; part of our blessed hope in the return of Jesus is that we will be wholly sanctified, completely holy. Our sinful nature will be stripped entirely from us. The yearning for our heavenly body will be over!

### John’s use of Ezekiel 40-48 in Revelation 21:12–22:5.

The following verses describe the city; they speak of gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The foundations have the names of the twelve apostles and so on. John will use language that is very familiar to readers of the book of Ezekiel. Most spiritual details about the New Jerusalem are quoted directly from Ezekiel. We spent a lot of time discussing how John uses the book of Ezekiel, and we can add this to the list. Without going into excruciating detail, I will state this and let you wrestle with it: How John uses Ezekiel does not align with our most popular modern beliefs.

#### Popular American Teaching:

Jesus 2nd Coming = Revelation 19

Millennial Reign = Revelation 20 and Ezekiel 40-48

Battle of Gog and Magog = Revelation 20 and Ezekiel 38-39

#### Where John quotes Ezekiel:

Revelation 19-20 = Ezekiel 38-39

Revelation 21-22 = Ezekiel 40-48

John actively quotes Ezekiel in these passages. As Christians who are serious about the Bible, we must be willing to wrestle with passages. While end-times systems are not the most important subject to have correct, they can signal how we wrestle with the more important subjects. If we don’t wrestle with our beliefs because “this is what I want to believe” and “this is what I’ve always been taught,” we must analyze if we carry that mentality over to other subjects.

### The Gates

In John’s vision of the New Jerusalem, John sees twelve gates. The city’s east, north, south, and west walls have three gates each. These gates have names, which are the twelve tribes of Israel. Let’s compare that to Ezekiel 48.

**Revelation 21:12–13 (ESV):** 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.

**Ezekiel 48:30–31 (ESV):** 30 “These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, 31 three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, **the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel.**

The redemption of Israel is essential to God. John starts by talking about New Jerusalem with the inclusion of natural Israel, those who descend from the original twelve tribes. As Paul states in Romans 11:26, “26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;

## The Foundation

Next, we are given the city’s foundation, the twelve apostles. This detail is significant in that the twelve apostles are the foundation of the new and forever Temple of God, you and I.

**Ephesians 2:20–22 (ESV):** 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

As we discussed earlier in this chapter about God’s “tabernacle” with His people, the apostles being depicted as the foundation of the New Jerusalem tells us that in this New Creation, it will be brought to completion. God will dwell with us, and we will be with Him forever; we will not be limited to a tent or a building; there will be no limitation at all! We will be with Him completely unhindered.

## The Measurements

Revelation 21:15–17 gives us a familiar sight where John is given city measurements. In Revelation 11, John is given a measuring rod to measure the “temple of God and the altar and those who worship there.” Ezekiel in Ezekiel 40 and Zechariah in Zechariah 2 likewise contained visions of measuring rods. It is apparent that John’s measurements of the New Jerusalem are by far the greatest measurement in number than any that have come before it. John’s New Jerusalem measures approximately 1500 miles wide. To compare, Texas is ‘only’ 773 miles wide. Modern Jerusalem is only 48 miles wide. John’s New Jerusalem is BIG. Most agree that this is not about a literal size for Jerusalem, this is about how grand and glorious it is. It is beyond the wildest dreams. It is so grand and glorious that it outshines even Texas in scale!

When speaking about living on the New Earth, it has been common for believers to associate our current situation on Earth with the New Earth. This sometimes makes people even a little disappointed that our final destination is Earth, not Heaven. However, this cannot be further from the truth. The New Earth will be unrecognizable; it will be pure paradise without pain, death, or sin. It will be greater than anything we can imagine or put into words. Don’t worry; the remnants of this Earth we live on now will be completely wiped away.

The height of the walls is something to behold; the city is as tall as it is wide! To give you some context, Mount Everest is 5.5 miles high. The atmosphere of the earth is only 62 miles high! We are not dealing with an actual city measurement here, especially because the walls are only 144 cubits wide. 144 cubits is approximately 72 yards, so it’s smaller than a football field.

John isn’t communicating literal dimensions, but the numbers he uses are significant. **The walls are 12,000 stadia** (1500 miles). **The wall width is 144 cubits.** We have seen these symbolic numbers before in Revelation 7. There, John does a census on the end-times army. The end times army contains 12,000 soldiers (Revelation 14) for twelve tribes of Israel, totaling 144,000. The wall is 144 cubits in John’s vision.

If you go back to our notes on Revelation 7, you know that we are the end times army; we will march behind Jesus as he battles the forces of darkness. Using the same numbers, John wants us to connect the two. Not only are we the end times army, but we are the New Jerusalem; they are the same, the followers of the Lamb!

**Revelation 7:4–5 (ESV):** 4 And I heard the number of the sealed, **144,000**, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 5 **12,000** from the tribe of Judah were sealed, **12,000** from the tribe of Reuben, **12,000** from the tribe of Gad,

Lastly, we can see that the city truly reaches into heaven, something they couldn’t do at Babel. In their pride, they sought to “make a name for themselves” by building a tower. We can only build a tower to the heavens by carrying His Name (Revelation 14:1, Revelation 22:4).

## The Walls

The walls are built upon the foundation (Apostles) of the New City. The walls represent us—believers in the Lamb. We can tell because of how the walls are described. They are built of “jasper” (verse 18). This is the same material used to describe the Bride of Christ in verses 9-11.

Further, it is described as pure gold, like transparent glass. See Revelation 3:18.

In the Temple, most things were made or covered in gold; in the Garden of Eden, we read that of a river and its gold and precious stone:

**Genesis 2:11–12 (ESV)** 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.

God dwelled with man on earth in both the Garden and the Temple. It is no surprise that we see the same imagery in John’s vision of God dwelling on earth forever with His people. It is the cherry on top of the ice cream!

The foundation of the walls is then shown to be adorned with twelve precious stones. As we have seen in Revelation 4 and earlier in this chapter, the precious stones represent the Glory of God. Isaiah also foretold the walls being of precious stone (Isaiah 54:12). The number of stones is significant; there are twelve stones in total, just like the high priest wore on his breastplate to represent the tribes of Israel (Exodus 28:17-20). The stones are not identical to the ones worn by the high priest; the list combines with Ezekiel 28. Ezekiel 28 is one of the more well-known passages in Ezekiel. It is where we get a theory that Satan may have been an “angel” in charge of worship. In Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel compares the King of Tyre to a divine rebel. Doing so gives us insight into the divine rebel but, more importantly, ideas of how the Garden of Eden was viewed. Verse 13 is where we get the list of precious stones along with a description of the Garden:

**Ezekiel 28:13 (ESV)** 13 **You were in Eden, the Garden of God;** every **precious stone** was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in **gold** were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created, they were prepared.

The significance of bringing Ezekiel 28 into this is because of the descriptions of God’s Mountain Garden, where God and his heavenly host dwelled.

**Ezekiel 28:14 (ESV)** 14 You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; **you were on the holy mountain of God;** in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

**Ezekiel 28:16b (ESV)** 16 ...so I cast you as a **profane thing from the mountain of God**, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

The New Jerusalem is the new Mountain Garden. It’s the place where God dwells with His creation in paradise. We become part of God’s Council of Heavenly Host and rule and reign with Him forever and ever (Revelation 22:5). *(Long story short, the “stones of fire” mentioned are other angelic beings. This comes from star language, stones (round objects) that are on fire (that shine) like a star.)*

## No Temple Building

John tells us there is no temple building in the New City, because the Temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. Now, on its own, you may think, “Wait, I thought we were the temple?” As described earlier about Jesus “tabernacling” with us, we are the body of Christ. There is no contradiction here. The Lamb is the Temple, and we are His body. We also have seen how the New Jerusalem itself is drawn from temple language. You could say there is no temple in the city because the whole city is a temple; it’s the place where God’s tabernacles dwell.

This does go against Jewish expectations; they would expect a physical temple building. But as we have discussed, that became a reality in a spiritual sense in that the Body of Christ is the Temple. This doesn't refute Ezekiel's vision of a future temple; instead, it explains it through the lens of what the future Temple would be: the Bride of Christ, the whole New Jerusalem.

### **God will be our everything.**

The rest of the chapter, starting in verse 23, tells us the city does not need a sun or moon to shine for the glory of God gives light, and the Lamb is its lamp. This speaks of our dependence upon God alone. Right now, we can often depend on things other than Him. The sun and the moon represent the flow of time; we rule our lives by it. We have phrases like "time is money." While it's not the same as how ancient people would worship the sun, moon, and stars, it's not as different as we may think.

Ancient cultures worshipped gods represented by things like the sun to gain favor for their crops to grow, the weather to be favorable, and whatever they needed to survive. We are very much the same way; we need jobs to pay the bills, but often, those jobs can become our lives; they can become idols to us. Even further, we can depend on forms of entertainment to occupy our time, help with stress, etc. It's not a stretch to say we can idolize these things if we go too far. In the New Earth, our dependence will be on nothing except Him; there will be no need for anything but Him. He will be our everything. Everything we do in the new Edenic Creation will be with a focus and in partnership with Him.

### **The Fulfillment of Prophecy.**

In verses 24-26, it says:

**Revelation 21:24–26 (ESV)** 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.

John is telling us he saw the fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah 60 is no doubt in view here:

**Isaiah 60:1–4 (ESV)** 1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. 2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. 3 And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. 4 Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.

In several passages, we see prophetic expectations that the nations will come to worship the King (see Isaiah 66:2, Zechariah 14:16). John tells us that New Jerusalem fulfills these prophecies. The nations and kings are us. We will come to the Lord and worship Him. We will see His glory face to face (Revelation 22:4). Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of scripture. When He returns and creates a New Heaven and Earth, everything prophesied will be fulfilled, nothing will be left hanging, every 'i' will be dotted, every 't' crossed. It will be finished once and for all.

John tells us in verse 27 that no uncleanness will ever enter the holy city, only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Only those who follow the Lamb, who believe in Him, His death and resurrection. Those marked with His Name - Revelation 22:4: "4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."

### **The River, the Tree, and the Healing of the Nations.**

Chapter 22 introduces us back to the Garden. John will use both Ezekiel 47 and Genesis 2-3 to explain what he saw.

**Revelation 22:1–2 (ESV)** 1 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.

As we examine the river, we see that it flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The Throne is both God's and the Lamb's because Jesus is God. He is Yahweh in the flesh. This river flows through the middle of the city, and on

each side of the river grows the “Tree of Life.” The tree, which is seemingly many trees, bears twelve kinds of fruit and yields its fruit each month. The leaves of the Tree of Life are used to heal the nations.

Connecting to Genesis 2-3 is straightforward. God made a Garden in the middle of the Garden, the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9). After Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Good and Evil, they were exiled from the Garden so that they couldn’t eat from the Tree of Life and live forever (Genesis 3:22). The Tree of Life will never be seen again until the New Creation.

There are many direct connections to Ezekiel’s vision as well. In Ezekiel’s vision, he also sees a river (Ezekiel 47:1). As the river continues, Ezekiel sees he sees trees growing on both sides of the river:

**Ezekiel 47:12 (ESV)** 12 And on the banks, **on both sides of the river**, there will **grow all kinds of trees for food**. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, **but they will bear fresh fruit every month**, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and **their leaves for healing.**”

Just as we are not talking about a literal cube city that is 1500x1500x1500 miles, we are not talking about literal rivers and trees. While there will undoubtedly be rivers and everything we need, remember that we are the city. This river is flowing through us and producing fruit in us. There will never be a time that we won’t produce fruit. Likewise, it is this river that will heal us.

So what is this river? It is the Holy Spirit. In John 7, Jesus is celebrating the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles. On the last day, John records:

**John 7:37–39 (ESV)** 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow **rivers of living water.**’” 39 **Now this he said about the Spirit**, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The Holy Spirit isn’t going to go away in the New Creation. The Holy Spirit is God (2 Corinthians 3:18). He will always be in us; He is what will make us holy. He not only wants to produce fruit in us now (Galatians 5:22-23) but will produce good fruit in us forever and ever.

What is incredible is Jesus spoke this on the last day of the Feast of Booths (also called Tabernacles). The Feast of Tabernacles is the feast most connected with His Second Coming. The Feast of Booths is the Feast connected with palm branches from Revelation 7:9. We also see this Feast mentioned in Zechariah 14:16: “16 Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.”

Jesus knew what He was doing; Jesus is pretty cool. His Spirit in us will heal everything in the kingdom to come; our hearts, minds, and bodies will be renewed entirely; we will be made like Him, and it will be so much better than we can even imagine.

John ends the prophetic vision part of Revelation by telling us the accursed will be no more; we will worship Jesus forever. We will see Him face-to-face. We will bear His name on our foreheads forever.

### **The Name of God on us**

Revelation 22:4 ESV

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

We spent a significant amount of time talking about bearing the name in the Revelation 13 notes. While I do not want to rehearse all that information again, I want to point out how often John uses this language. Coming from the Ten Commandments to not “take” or “carry” the Lord’s Name in vain. This is not about literal marks; this is about

representing Him. The mark of the beast is the anti-mark. While there could be a physical mark in the future, do not be mistaken. The anti-mark is already here on the spiritual side of things. We must choose each day whose name we will carry. Jesus' Name, the Name above every other name (Philippians 2:9), the only Name that saves (Acts 4:12), or any other name? As Joshua said:

**Joshua 24:14–15 (LEB)** 14 “So now, revere Yahweh and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness; remove the gods that your ancestors served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh. 15 But if it is bad in your eyes to serve Yahweh, choose for yourselves today whom you want to serve, whether it is the gods that your ancestors served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve Yahweh.”

Whose name do you carry? Satan's name? Your name? Or do you carry the name of Jesus? Is His name written on your forehead? All we must do is believe Him and repent from our sin. All who call on the NAME of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).

### **Revelation 22:6-21 - Jesus Is Coming Soon**

In John's closing of the book of Revelation, He assures us what he has told us is trustworthy and true. In verse 7, he directly quotes Jesus:

**Revelation 22:7 (ESV)** 7 “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

It's a powerful message. Jesus is coming soon. In Verse 12, Jesus tells us he is coming with His “recompense.” This word means He will make everything right. He will make all the wrong things that have been done right. He is a just judge; He comes to get His own and live with them for all eternity.

We are encouraged in the book to keep the words of this book. This doesn't mean figuring out the end times. It means to carry His Name. To love Him above all else. Even if it means persecution and death, He will repay the evil done to you and me. We are responsible for offering our lives as a living sacrifice and saying, “You will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” He is coming soon, and we must His will before He returns. In these last fifteen verses, Jesus tells us He is coming soon three times. We are to live ready for Him to come.

John writes in Revelation 22:17, “17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” Our response to Jesus should be “come.” This world, as it is now, is not our home. The word “come” is simple but carries a lot with it. For Him to come it means we have to preach the Gospel. We need to pray souls into the kingdom. We have to call the prodigals home. We have to heal the sick, raise the dead, and do works greater than Jesus (John 14:12). It is a high calling to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit. If you learn nothing from this book other than this, it would be worth it: we are called to clothe ourselves with Christ, to follow Him wherever He goes, to live pure and holy lives, and to proclaim His message to the lost.

Maranatha, our Lord come.