

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 21:9-27

Topic

John is given a tour of the New Jerusalem within which
Jesus is building our eternal homes

Title

*"There is a House in New Jerusalem
Being Built by the Risen Son"*

Introduction

It's back-to-school time, so I thought we'd begin with a math problem.

If, on average, one human being takes up a space 2 feet by 2 feet by 6 feet, how many **cubic feet** does a person occupy?

That's right; we each occupy about 24 cubic feet of space.

Here is something a little more challenging. In the year 2000, when the earth's population hit 6 billion, how many cubic miles would it have taken to fit everyone on planet earth?

Everyone on earth would have fit in one cubic mile.

One cubic mile is 147,197,952,000 cubic feet. Divide by 24 and you get 6,133,248,000.

The math gives us some perspective on our topic. In our text the heavenly city New Jerusalem comes down from Heaven. It measures not one mile in every direction, but about 1400 miles in every direction. That's 2.06×10 to the fourteenth power cubic feet.

I can't really fathom a number that big, so let's dumb it down. If the city had 20 billion residents, which is about three-times the current population of the earth, each person would have a cube of space that is seventy-five acres **in every direction**.

You know one thing that tells us? A lot of people have gotten saved, and many more will get saved, before the city makes its dramatic appearance.

(BTW - mathematicians calculate that only about 108 billion people have ever lived on earth).

While all that is interesting, it isn't the emphasis that the Holy Spirit puts on this appearance of the New Jerusalem. He focuses first on *you*, then on *Jesus*.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Will Inhabit Your Mansion In The New Jerusalem, and #2 Jesus Will Illuminate The Universe From The New Jerusalem.

#1 You Will Inhabit Your Mansion In The New Jerusalem

(v9-10)

Jesus promised His disciples - including you and I - "in My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Some scholars, and certain translations of the Bible, substitute words like "abiding places" or "rooms" or "dwelling places" for the word "mansions."

Those words are all possible translations. So is that what we're going to have in Heaven - a "room?"

If you're not convinced you will have a mansion after reading chapter twenty-one, *then you're just not listening.*

Revelation 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."

This angel retired as a bowl-pourer into a second career as a tour guide in the New Jerusalem.

We must remain flexible serving the Lord. Yes, God has gifted each of us in unique ways. But ministry isn't always about getting to exercise my gift or gifts the way I'd like to. It's about doing what the Holy Spirit directs you to do.

"The bride, the Lamb's wife" is the church - comprised of all those saved from the birthday of the church on the Day of Pentecost up until the rapture of the church.

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

You're never told that the New Jerusalem is **on** the earth. It seems to hover **over** the earth. The new, recently created eternal earth is like a satellite of the New Jerusalem - not vice-versa.

People get confused, because the angel said he'd show John the bride, but what follows is a long description of the city.

The solution is simple, really. When the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven to earth, *the bride is already living in it.*

When John sees the New Jerusalem, he sees the bride, living in community, enjoying eternity, in this great city. By describing the city, he was letting us know that we will all one day be home safe.

I don't think it's unspiritual to look forward to your mansion. If for no other reason, it is a gift, being custom crafted, to the most minute detail, by the One Who loved you so much that He died for you while you were yet a sinner, and an enemy of God.

We know that creation - everything we call the universe - was spoken into existence by God.

We know, too, that Jesus was the Creator, because we read in Colossians 1:16-17, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

Regarding the New Jerusalem, and your mansion, does Jesus simply speak it all into existence? He certainly can; but does He?

He said to us He was leaving to "**prepare** a place" for us. His immediate followers - all Jews - would have understood that He was comparing His departure and return to the Jewish wedding customs of their day.

The bridegroom would be away preparing the home that the couple would live in and, once it was finished, He would return, suddenly and secretly without warning, to take her there.

I therefore humbly suggest that Jesus is working on your mansion **by hand**. It is being *constructed*, rather than *created*.

After all, He was a carpenter by trade. A first century Jewish carpenter was really more than that. The Greek word describing the trade is *tekton* which included a master builder, master stone mason, and one skilled in metal technology.

You say He doesn't have time to work on each mansion so personally? Romance always finds time to express itself to the one who is loved; and Jesus' love for you is the greatest romance of all time.

Our part is to remain excited, and in love, with our absent but returning Bridegroom.

#2 Jesus Will Illuminate The Universe From The New Jerusalem

(v11-27)

The newspaper article said, "Men fell on their knees, groans were uttered at the sight, and many were dumb with amazement."

That was the reaction of the residents and witnesses who were present to watch Wabash, Indiana become the first town in the world to illuminate the night with electric lights in 1880.

Whether it's Hong Kong or New York, Seoul or Chicago, Paris or Vegas, we've come a long way illuminating the night.

All of our cities combined are less than a match-light compared to the illumination of the New Jerusalem. In verse twenty-three we are told that Jesus is the light source for the New Jerusalem. The city will be constructed in such a manner that the light of Jesus Christ will reflect throughout it, and through it to the rest of the universe.

Revelation 21:11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Precious jewels and gems are its construction materials. They have the correct properties needed to reflect the light of God to every part of the new heaven and the new earth.

The whole city is like a precious gem. It is overall likened unto a "jasper" stone. The modern jasper is a multicolored quartz stone.

The stone referred to here cannot be that for this stone is not opaque. "Jasper" is a transliteration of the word *iaspis* which is of Semitic origin. Moffatt suggests that *iaspis* could mean the modern opal, diamond, or topaz.

The stone described is transparent and gleaming so it is most likely the diamond.

Revelation 21:12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

Revelation 21:13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

More retired angels; these serve as honor guards.

The gates have the names of the "twelve tribes of Israel." Talk about symbolism. It was *through* Israel that you and I were able to enter eternity. It is *through* the King of the Jews that the whole world is offered salvation.

I mentioned last time we were together that believers other than the church would also reside in the New Jerusalem. A passage in the Book of Hebrews (12:22-24) distinguishes between the residents of the city.

- There are those identified as "the general assembly and church of the first born," meaning the church.
- And there are "the spirits of just men made perfect," referring to Old Testament saints, justified by faith before Jesus came, like Abraham.

Revelation 21:14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

After Judas betrayed Jesus and hung himself, there were only eleven. Who is the twelfth apostle? In the Book of Acts they cast lots and picked Matthias.

Some say that it was God's intent for Paul to be the twelfth apostle.

The weight of the biblical evidence seems to favor Matthias. After he was chosen the Holy Spirit refers to the group as "the twelve," not "the eleven plus Matthias."

Is it really possible that the great apostle Paul will not have his name commemorated in the city, on a stone? Yes. Let it be a lesson to us.

Revelation 21:15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

The angel moonlights as a surveyor. These guys do whatever they are tasked with. Great example to us.

Revelation 21:16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

Revelation 21:17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The New Jerusalem's length, height and width are equal. This means that it is either a cube or a pyramid.

A cube is more reminiscent of the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple, suggesting that the entire city is the 'new' Holy Place.

John mentioned that the cubit measure of an angel is the same as for a man. This answers the question about whether we'll use the metric system in Heaven. Apparently we'll use Bible weights and measures. Better familiarize yourself with the span, the talent, and the omer.

Revelation 21:18 The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Revelation 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

Revelation 21:20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

Amazing, vibrant colors will be produced as the light passes through these various gems.

"Pure gold" is said to be "like clear glass." In verse twenty-one we will read that "the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass."

As for pure gold being transparent, I came across this bit of trivia from NASA:

The visors of astronauts' space helmets receive a coating of gold so thin that it is **partially transparent**. The astronauts can **see through it**, but, even at that thinness, the gold film reduces glare and heat from sunlight.

Revelation 21:21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Forget the giant pearls; where are the oysters that created them???

We talk about pearly gates and streets of gold, but there appears to be only *one* street of gold in the city. No cul-de-sacs or dead ends.

I want to concentrate on the building materials. They are precious gems and minerals. What do you think about that? I've heard it said that gold will be so common that it's being used as asphalt.

That's one way of looking at it. But let me ask you: What do we do with precious stones and gold today? Or, better yet, what do wives want their husbands to do with them?

They are in the jewelry that we give to the one we love.

Remember we saw the city described as a diamond? The New Jerusalem is a diamond in a gold setting, as the singular, transparent street ribbons its way through it. This city is like a huge ring - only instead of wearing it, it will surround the bride.

Extravagance is a trait of romantic love. You want to be able to give your loved one something amazing. It's not because you are materialistic; it's because you are romantic.

Things that have value, when given to the one you love, show you care more about him or her than all the things in all the world. If you could, you'd give your loved one the world – because the one you love has more value to you than everything valuable in the world.

If you are Jesus you *can* give your beloved everything. It is symbolized in the extravagance of the New Jerusalem.

Cities aren't usually notable for what is not in them. The New Jerusalem *will* be notable for something that is not there. There will not be a temple of any kind there.

Revelation 21:22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The sense I get of John's statement "I saw no Temple in it" is that he was looking for one. The Temple at Jerusalem had been a focal point in his life. For many years he had visited it at least twice annually as was required of every male Jew.

From his knowledge of the Millennium, gained both from his reading the Scriptures and from the Revelation he had received about the future, John was aware there would be a magnificent Temple on the earth during Jesus' thousand-year reign.

The lack of a Temple in the New Jerusalem would have been a stunning realization for John. Stunning in a good way because he was immediately inspired to understand that “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple.”

Revelation 21:23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

We wish there was more description of eternity, but in reality we can't understand it. I mean, can you fathom an earth with no sun or moon? The physics of it are beyond us.

Since “God is light” and “in Him is no darkness at all” (1John 1:5) and since Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 9:5), it would not do for there to be darkness or night in the New Jerusalem.

Bottom line: The New Jerusalem is constructed in such a way that, in eternity, the light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ is sent through it to the entire universe.

Revelation 21:24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

The earth below the hovering New Jerusalem will still have “nations” and “kings.” Who are these earth dwellers?

The word for "nations" describes Gentiles, i.e., all who are not ethnic Jews.

That makes sense. The New Jerusalem will be populated by the church, and by saved Israelites who we call Old Testament saints. *But there will also be multitudes of saved Gentiles, neither members of the church nor ethnic Jews.*

For example there will be multitudes saved during both the Tribulation and in the Millennium. Most will be Gentiles, not Jews; and since the church is raptured prior to either, they are not the bride of Jesus.

They are in no way second-class, however. These will inhabit the earth, in kingdoms that bring their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

Shutting the gates of a city were for its protection from enemies and intruders. None will exist in eternity. The open gates will be a constant reminder of the blessedness of our mutual fellowship.

Even today you still refer to some communities as a place where people don't have to lock their doors. Sadly, you usually hear that expression in the past tense after something awful just happened in a place where people never used to lock their doors.

Second, these gates are beautiful. They are beautiful architectural marvels that enhance the extravagance of the city. We add things to buildings just to adorn them, do we not?

Besides that, you remember they are to be made of pearl. Not just made of many pearls but "the twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl."

You can't help but think of the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price that Jesus told while on the first century earth. In it a wealthy merchant shopping for pearls found a magnificent pearl. He sold everything to purchase it.

In the parable, the merchant is Jesus and the church is the pearl. He did indeed pay a great price for us - a king's ransom as it were. He died on the Cross to ransom us from sin and death.

The pearly gates are a constant reminder of the Lord's love for His bride.

Revelation 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

When folks go somewhere they often bring something back with them as gifts that represent the place they've visited. Macadamia Nuts or pineapple from Hawaii, for example. (Although Kona Coffee is much to be preferred).

Whatever it is that the nations produce during eternity will be brought up to the New Jerusalem to be enjoyed and to reveal the glory and honor of those nations and their inhabitants.

Revelation 21:27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

All who enter or exit will have been fully and finally conformed into the image of Jesus. We will have free will that is incapable of sin and rebellion.

Anything or anyone who might defile has been permanently removed and sentenced to the Lake of Fire. There is no escape and they can never enter the city or walk upon the earth.

What an encouragement that finally, in the end, only those who love the Lord will be in community together.

There are seven references to the “Book of Life” in the Revelation (3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12&15, and here).

My take on the “Book of Life” is that it is the census of every person ever conceived. Those who reach an age and an understanding that can reject Jesus Christ and who die without Him as their Savior will have their name “blotted out,” deleted from the Book of Life.

In the end, when it contains only the names of the saints, it bears the name of the One Who saved them. Perhaps it is given to Jesus, to cherish as a memento of His work of redeeming those it lists. Thus it is "the Lamb's Book of Life."

In eternity, Jesus is going to illuminate the universe. The current earth is subject to darkness; and by that I mean a terrible spiritual darkness.

- Colossians 1:13 mentions a kingdom of darkness.
- Acts 26:18 describes salvation as "turn[ing] from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that [we] may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in [Jesus]."
- Ephesians 6:12 says there are principalities and powers who rule over "this present darkness."

If you're a Christian, after you're saved, you have to navigate through the kingdom of darkness all around you. It's a spiritual combat zone.

I can liken it to having night vision goggles; you 'see' your enemies, and can stay on the path God has set before you.

You have the Gospel to share. It's like a burst of light in the eyes of those accustomed to the dark. Some are drawn to it, while others withdraw from it, loving their darkness and the dirty deeds done there.

Jesus once said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

You can walk in that light *now*, through this present darkness, and then *forever*, when Jesus illuminates the universe.

It's God's will for every one of us, and for everyone.

There's plenty of room in the New Jerusalem. But you need, in the end, to be written in Jesus' Book of Life in order to have an address there along its street of gold.

If you're not a believer... You're in danger of having your named blotted out.

Come to the Cross; come to Jesus.

