

## **Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 29, Revelation 21, The Bride New Jerusalem Cont.**

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is lecture 29 on Revelation 21, The Bride, New Jerusalem, continued.

So, we've been looking at the New Jerusalem as part of the final climactic section of John's vision.

And I suggested that one way to look at it is actually two things to note. First of all, it's important to realize that John, despite the detailed description of the city, John, I think, sees it primarily as symbolic for the people themselves, and not that there will not be a literal physical city in the New Creation or cities. That's not John's purpose or his point.

He seems to use, like other New Testament authors, building or temple imagery to refer to the people themselves, and I think that's what John is doing here. The second thing is one way to divide chapter 21, starting with verse 9. John seems to describe first of all the architectural features of the city, such as its makeup and the different parts of it as far as foundations and gates, and then also the measurements of it as well. Then, starting with verse 22 and ending with verse 21, we'll see that John focuses on who is there or who inhabits the New Jerusalem.

In one sense, he's already telling us that it's the people of God who are the building stones and who make up the temple. More specifically, John will tell us, starting with verse 22, who inhabits the New Jerusalem temple. We've already noted, too, that John seems to be merging a number of images to symbolically portray the end-time, final, consummated people of God.

One of them is a bride language; the other is a city language, but also a temple language. And already, and we'll see that in more detail in preparation for something that becomes more clear in 22, verses 1 through 5, John also portrays the new creation and the New Jerusalem temple as the Garden of Eden, a return to paradise or the restoration and renewal of paradise from Genesis chapters 1 and 2. But to then return to a handful of features regarding the New Jerusalem, as far as its makeup, is the measurement of the city, which comes once more out of Ezekiel and probably Zechariah 2 as well. Because in Zechariah 2, the city is measured, as we said before, whereas in Ezekiel 40 through 48, which is the primary model John uses, the temple itself is measured.

But that's John's point. He wants to portray the city as a temple and not have a separate temple in it, as we'll see in a moment as well. But John draws on Ezekiel's measuring imagery.

We saw back in chapter 11 and the first two verses that John drew on Ezekiel 40 through 48 to describe the measuring of a temple, which was probably there as well; the temple signified the people of God that were both preserved and protected, yet part of the temple was not measured and thrown out to the Gentiles, indicating that the church would still suffer persecution. Now John also sees the temple measured, and the question is, what does the measuring signify here? Probably two ideas. One of them is that, and this was the case back in chapter 11, the measuring there signified protection and preservation, and probably it does here as well.

But it's not necessary to signify preservation in terms of protection from enemies or something like that, but simply to symbolically portray the eternal preservation and the eternal security of the people of God in the new creation. Second, the other feature of measuring is, I think, to demonstrate the extent and magnitude of the people of this city, the magnitude of the consummated people of God themselves. So, the measurement is not meant to portray an architectural blueprint that somehow we should imagine or think of a literal city and then be able to speculate as far as how many people might be there and how many people might actually live in the new Jerusalem in the future.

No, the measurements are symbolically meant to portray both the security of God's people for eternity, as well as the magnitude and the extent of the end-time people of God that enter the new creation. Along with this, note the dimensions of the new Jerusalem, which once more, I would argue, does not signify a literal architectural blueprint of what the city is supposed to look like. We've suggested already that the city probably symbolizes the people of God.

Back in verses 9 and 10, John heard that he was going to see the bride Jerusalem, what he saw, and what he has shown here and described as a city. So the city symbolizes the people of God. That is further supported by the measurements of the city.

Notice that all the measurements that you read here, the city itself, its breadth and length and width, which we said allude to the Holy of Holies, so the whole city is a giant cube shape, Holy of Holies. It's square in the shape of the temple and other features in Ezekiel's chapters 40 through 48, Ezekiel's vision of the end time temple. But now John's measurements note that they are, first of all, 12,000 stadia, so the length and width is 12,000 stadia, and then the wall is 144 cubits.

It's not clear whether that's the height of the wall. Most translations translate the thickness of the wall. In either case, we'll see that's rather interesting that the wall

would seem to be out of proportion to the size of the city if you're trying to make visual sense of it.

But what I want to focus on for the moment is the numbers. Note that both of these numbers, the only ones mentioned in the text, are multiples of 12. So the first one, 12,000, would simply be 12 times 1,000, that is 1,000 being a large round number, now times 12 brings 12,000, 12 then being a symbol of the people of God themselves, the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles.

So 12,000 is another way of saying here is the magnitude of and the complete people of God in the eschatological consummation. Here are the consummated people of God symbolized by the number 12, times 1,000 bringing about a large number. But even 144 cubits, whether it's the thickness or height of the wall, 144 being the 12 times 12.

So the author's working with the number 12, not to indicate some architectural dimensions of exactly what the city will look like, but the number 12 signifying the people of God. Now he worked with that number to demonstrate the secure, consummated people of God in all their glory and all their magnitude now entering the new creation. And by the way, note too the measurements in stadia and cubits.

A stadia was roughly 200 yards or so. And so the city is in visual or even literal dimensions, it would be roughly 1500 miles high and wide, etc. Also, a cubit is the measurement you find in Ezekiel 40 through 48. The measurement being used for the temple was about 18 to 20 inches long.

So the author's simply using common measurements from his day. But the huge size of the city, being roughly 1500 miles high and wide and long, etc., suggests, I think, once more the symbolic nature of this vision that the author is not envisioning a literal city, but the perfected, consummated people of God themselves, who now enter the new creation. And that's symbolized by the huge dimension of the city, but also the number 12.

And the fact that back in 9, he's already identified the bride, which is the people, with the city itself. So the whole city, then the entire city's people, you might say, is a holy temple where God dwells. John has taken Ezekiel 40 through 47, especially 48 in Ezekiel; Ezekiel does see them, but in 40 through 47, his vision is occupied with the restored end-time temple.

Now, John takes all that temple imagery and applies it to the entire city to indicate that the city is a holy temple where God dwells. Another way of looking at it is even in Ezekiel 40 through 48, but also in the Exodus story, the very intention of God bringing his people out of Egypt through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, was so that he could dwell with them in a tabernacle, and eventually a temple. So the whole

idea of bringing them out of Egypt is that he would be their God, they would be his people, and he would dwell in their midst in a tabernacle.

So now we see the goal of the Exodus finally reached with God dwelling in his temple people in Revelation 21 and 22 as well. One other feature that we highlighted very briefly is the fact that the whole city is made of gold, and even the measuring rod to measure it is made of gold, which is fitting to measure a city that is made primarily of gold. There are probably two ideas lying behind this.

One of them, I think, is clear, the other a little bit more subtle perhaps, though other places in 21 and 22 make this connection more clear, especially 22, 1 through 5. And that is, first of all, the clear indication, I think, is that by portraying the city as gold, the entire city is made of gold; the author is portraying it as a temple or Tabernacle from the Old Testament. That is, when you go back to Exodus and read the account of the building of the Tabernacle, go to 1 Kings 5 through 7 and read the account of the building of Solomon's temple. Gold was a significant metal used in the construction of the temple. Everything was made of gold or everything was overlaid with gold.

So, by portraying the temple as gold, once more, this is not a literal architectural feature. The author wants to portray the New Jerusalem as a temple, a holy space, and a holy dwelling of God with his people. But furthermore, I, more subtly, the gold here may also recall the gold that was found in the Garden of Eden.

If you go back to Genesis chapter 2, and, by the way, there are a couple of other texts, other Jewish texts, and apocalyptic texts that make this connection between gold and the Garden of Eden. But back in chapter 2, where we find a description of the Garden, I'll begin with verse 8. Now, the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

In the middle of the Garden were the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We'll come back to that text in a moment later. A river watering the Garden flowed from Eden.

And we'll see that image as well in chapter 22 of Revelation. From there, it separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is Pishon.

It winds through the entire land of Havilah where there is gold. And notice the gold of that land is good. Aromatic resin and onyx are also there.

So, Havilah, in association with the river that comes out of the garden, is now associated with gold and other precious jewels. So, at one level, both the precious

jewels but also the gold would be one way of John presenting or one way of John portraying the city temple as also restored Eden, as also the Garden of Eden. And this will get developed in even more detail and actually a little bit in the next section.

But in 22 verses 1 through 5, the connections with the Garden of Eden are unmistakable. But the next section I want to look at, the final section of the description of the makeup of the city, the construction of the city, its features and its measurement, is found in verses 19 through 20. Actually, at this point, we stopped reading verse 18.

So, I want to pick up with verse 19 and read to the end of chapter 21. So, beginning with verse 19, the foundations of the city walls, which were mentioned back in verse 14, the foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth barrel, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great seat of the street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Now here the foundation stones are enumerated and described and identified in detail.

We were introduced to the foundations back in verse 14, where they were identified with the twelve apostles. Now, the foundations slash apostles are further identified with twelve stones. And so I take it that primarily the stones then represent the apostles or symbolize the apostles who formed the bedrock or the foundation of the New Jerusalem, again symbolizing that this is the consummated people of God built on the apostles of the Lamb Jesus Christ.

This is a city that centers around the person of Jesus Christ, a multinational city that is built on the apostles of the Lamb, which is the church of Jesus Christ. Now the question is, why does John go to such lengths to describe the foundation apostles? Why does he go to such lengths to enumerate the stones that belong to or make up the twelve foundations? What do the twelve stones represent or suggest? And I

would suggest to you that there are a handful of plausible ideas, and there's really no need to think that John only intends one of these. It's possible, and I think very likely, that John is using an image that resonated with more than one idea brought with it; we'll see that John is using an image that carries with it a number of associations in its use in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature and apocalyptic literature as well.

First of all, the most obvious one I think is the stones represent simply the beauty of the city. It portrays it as a place of splendor. It portrays it as a place of purity.

It portrays it as a place of cost, something that is costly and valuable. It portrays it as a place that reflects God's glory. Notice the first stone is jasper.

The stones are meant simply at one level and at a rather obvious level to just portray the beauty of the city and the splendor as the place where God dwells. It reflects God's glory. A second function of these twelve stones, as well as some of the other stone imagery we saw in a few verses earlier, and the gold, is that the stones clearly function to draw out further the contrast between Jerusalem and Babylon.

That is, Babylon was a place which was described; the Babylon prostitute back in chapter 17, verse 3 was described as being decked in her garb, which was gold and silver and all kinds of precious stones. Now, you find the new Jerusalem decked out in stones, precious jewels, and gold as well to draw a stark contrast. This probably also contrasts with chapter 18 and verse 12 where gold, silver, and precious stones were part of the cargo that Rome valued and imported.

So the contrast then would be that what Rome exploited and perverted for its own use and its own selfish use, now the new Jerusalem is now presented as a representation or as a reflection of God's glory. To once more demonstrate, I think that the new Jerusalem then compensates for anything that the people of God sacrificed for failure to participate in Rome's economy and failure to participate in Rome's luxury. By foregoing that even to the point of suffering, remember the two churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, that receive a positive evaluation are poor, and they are suffering at the hands of Rome; they have no reputation.

Now, the jewels, I think, at one level here in the new Jerusalem, the same jewels that appeared in the Babylon prostitute vision, now appear here to demonstrate that this far exceeds and compensates for anything that the saints sacrifice by refusing to participate in Roman luxury and refusing to participate in their idolatrous godless practices and their commerce. A third association is one that we've already seen, and that is Isaiah chapter 54, verses 11 and 12, which portray the restoration of Jerusalem, a new Jerusalem. It doesn't use the word new Jerusalem, but it portrays the restoration of new Jerusalem in the future in terms of precious jewels where it

associated the different parts of Jerusalem, the gates, the foundations, and it associated the foundations with a particular jewel.

Portraying the new Jerusalem as made up of all these precious stones is another way John suggests that this is the fulfillment of the end-time restoration of the new Jerusalem expected in the Old Testament prophets. So, stones would suggest end-time eschatological restoration. A fourth function that I think is just as significant as the others is that these stones further highlight the city as a temple and the people of God as priests who serve in the temple.

And that is because the stones here, I think, evidently represent the stone, 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest. And so this continues the temple theme. It portrays the new Jerusalem as a temple and it portrays God's people as priests.

If you turn to Exodus chapter 28 and verses 15 through 21, you find a description of the breastplate that was to be worn by the high priest in the Tabernacle. Each of the 12 stones was meant to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Interestingly, here, they represent the 12 apostles, not because the apostles have placed Israel, but because, again, the author wants to emphasize that it's not only Israel but now all nations are included along with Israel centered around Jesus Christ as the new people of God.

So now the stones in the breastplate, because they're associated with the foundation, we saw the foundation was associated with the apostles. So, it's not suggesting the apostles kind of forget the tribes of Israel. The author wants to make clear that founded on the apostles in the New Testament is the church, which is a multinational, multicultural community made of people of every tribe, tongue, and language.

But Exodus 28 and the stones on the breastplate of the high priest ultimately lie behind this. The stones represent each of the 12 tribes and now representing the foundational member, the apostles of the church of Jesus Christ made of both Jew and Gentile into one new people of God. Notice also that according to this text, according to Ezekiel or Exodus 28, the breastplate was in the shape of a square, which is the shape of the city itself.

The New Jerusalem was already described as a square in John's vision. So, the entire city and God's people all function as priests who worship God. But I want to draw your attention to another interesting text that links also links the stones.

And this could be an additional feature. I'll treat it under the breastplate of the high priest, but this could be an additional meaning or an additional association of the stones. And back in Ezekiel chapter 28, in Ezekiel's oracles concerning Tyre, the city of Tyre that we've seen John utilize elsewhere to critique Rome's economy and its self-serving commerce and its lust for luxury and wealth.

Now in chapter 28, starting with verse 12. Actually, I'll start with verse 13. The author seems to be comparing Tyre to the situation in the fall of Adam in Genesis chapter one and two and three as well.

Notice how he describes in verse 13, you were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone adorned you. Ruby, topaz, an emerald, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold.

On the day you were created, they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God.

You walked among the fiery stones. So what I want you to notice is Adam is being portrayed here as a priest in the garden who wore the 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest. Now, especially when you compare the Hebrew text and the Greek text, there are issues related to what exactly it's not certain exactly what all these stones are.

The texts give you, I think, reasonable English translations of them, but I'm not interested in going into detail about exactly what these stones were and what the author envisioned as far as stones that people would have known of. I'm more interested in the overall associations, and what is intriguing here is that the stones of the breastplate of the high priest are associated with Adam and the Garden of Eden. And since Ezekiel 27 and 28 have already played a role, as well as the entire book of Ezekiel providing a model for John's vision throughout Revelation, where he almost follows it in order, it's highly likely that John is not only drawing Exodus 28 but also has Ezekiel 28 in mind as well, which then would associate the stones with both Adam and the Garden of Eden.

In fact, other texts, especially apocalyptic texts, portray the Garden of Eden as a temple where God's glory, Adam functioned as a priest, and God's glory filled the Garden. One interesting text is from another book with Enoch's name attached to it, called 3rd Enoch. This is 3 Enoch Chapter 5, starting in verse 1. From the day that the Holy One, blessed be He, banished the first man from the Garden, the Shekinah resided on a cherub beneath the Tree of Life. The ministering angels used to muster and come down from heaven in companies and in bands and cohorts from heaven to execute His will on all the earth.

The first man in his generation dwelt at the gate of the Garden of Eden so that they might gaze at the bright image of the Shekinah or the brilliance of the Shekinah, which radiated from one end of the world to the other. I'll stop right there, but in this text and other texts, the Garden of Eden is portrayed as a temple where God's glory and His presence reside, just as it did in the Tabernacle in the temple. Other texts make it clear, I think, that Adam functioned as a priest.



Certainly, Ezekiel 28 demonstrates the priestly associations of Adam, who wears the breastplate in the Garden and who wears the breastplate of the high priest, functioning as a priest in the Garden of Eden. In fact, interestingly, one book, if you're interested in reading it, is called Pseudo-Philo, but I won't read from it. But in Pseudo-Philo, one tradition then has it that the stones on the breastplate were actually taken from the Garden of Eden, and then they are eventually placed in the ark until the end time when they will be revealed.

And so, once more, note the connection of the stones with the Garden of Eden, as well as the eschatological implications that they are hidden and will be revealed in the future. Now, the stones are finally revealed in John's vision. Another interesting text to draw your attention to outside of the Bible itself, one that we already drew attention to, and that is the commentary on Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Qumran community, one of the Qumran texts.

And in one of the Isaiah commentaries, intriguingly, and we said in the Isaiah commentary on Isaiah 54, the author of that commentary from Qumran goes through the description of the restored Jerusalem, the gates, the walls, and the foundations, and he equates them, he equates the stones with founding members of the Qumran community as if he sees in his community justification for the establishment of his community, a prophetic anticipation of that in Isaiah 54. And so, what we saw was interesting is the author of the commentary on Isaiah 54 in the Qumran text equated the foundation and other stones with founding members of the community.

Interestingly as well, one of the stones from Isaiah 54 and one of the groups is also associated with the Urim and Thummim, which were two stones on the breastplate of the high priest. And so, you have an example in the Qumran text of taking Isaiah 54 and associating it with the stones on the breastplate of the high priest, which is exactly what John does. Isaiah 54 portrays the foundations of stones, which is the primary text John uses to portray the new Jerusalem in terms of stones.

Now, in a similar move that the author of the Qumran text made, John now also, I'm not saying he read that, but doing something similar, John also associates the stones on the breastplate with a feature of Isaiah 54 with the foundation stones from Isaiah 54. So then, the new Jerusalem is portrayed as a temple by associating it with the stones of the breastplate, which have been associated with Isaiah 54, and the stones that make up the new Jerusalem, which, again, John has taken metaphorically to refer to the people themselves. So that, ultimately, he sees the new Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God, where God's people are priests who now worship and serve God in the new temple, Jerusalem, in the new creation.

A fifth association, in addition to the temple imagery and Garden of Eden imagery, is that we should also understand these stones as part of the adornment of the bride. That is, we should take these as part of the nuptial imagery that John is using to portray the people of God. We already saw back in chapter 21 and verse 2 that John sees the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven adorned as a bride for her husband, drawing on Old Testament language.

So now, these jewels, these precious stones that make up the foundations, can also be seen as part of the bride's adornment, where now she is prepared as the bride in all her eschatological glory and presented to her husband, who is Jesus Christ. So I would suggest to you then that the multiple associations, that starting back with simply representing the beauty of the city, the splendor of the city as a place that reflects God's glory, it contrasts with Babylon Rome, it compensates for what they may have sacrificed at the hands of Babylon Rome by refusing to participate, it suggests eschatological restoration in that the stones are associated with a rebuilt Jerusalem, the presence of the stones here suggest eschatological end-time restoration, it suggests the priestly nature of the people of God, the temple nature of the city as a dwelling place of God where everyone wears now the breastplate of the high priest and they function as priests who serve and worship God, and along with that carries Garden of Eden and Paradise Associations, and then finally, it's part of the adornment of the bride. One other interesting feature back in chapter, I'm sorry, back to number four, the priestly associations with the breastplate, it's interesting that right before and right after in verse 18 and in verse 21, bracketing the description of the precious stones is a mention of gold as the makeup of the city, which once more is reflective of the description of the breastplate of the high priest back in Exodus 28 and elsewhere where they're set in gold, and so perhaps another connection with the breastplate imagery.

Now, one more feature of the city before we move on to look at its inhabitants, those who reside in it and who enter it, although already we're describing its inhabitants through the architectural features and makeup of the city symbolically meant to portray the people of God, but one other feature is the street in verse 21. In most Greco-Roman cities, there would have been a main street or a thoroughfare that went roughly down the center of the city, and that's usually where all the activity and commerce and things like that took place. That's probably what John has in mind here in reference to the street made of gold, and this is where we get the imagery of the street paved with gold, though we're probably not meant to take this with the littleness with which it's often treated, again, gold being symbolic of this as the dwelling place of God and a street being simply a common feature of any city for commerce and coming and going.

This, however, may also, in addition to, or maybe as an alternative to the street, the word here may also suggest a wide place or a plaza that would have been in a typical Greco-Roman city. It's interesting that there seem to be a few other features in the

New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 that reflect common conceptions during the time leading up to and during the first century, reflecting common conceptions of an ideal Greco-Roman city. One of them was a street or thoroughfare that went through the city.

Another one was the square shape and symmetry of the city, which was a feature of a Greco-Roman city. Another one was to have a good water supply, which you find in chapter 22, the river flowing out. So it's possible, too, that although John is primarily constructing his vision from Old Testament texts and even other Jewish apocalyptic texts, at the same time, John is constructing a vision of a city that would also at the same time resemble the ideal Greco-Roman city.

And that would stand to reason because all of his churches he's addressing in chapters two and three reside in Greco-Roman cities, in the provinces of Asia Minor, and in the provinces of Rome. Now, it's as if John wants to say that the true fulfillment of the ideal Greco-Roman city is not found in any city in Rome but will only be realized in the New Jerusalem, as anticipated in Old Testament prophetic texts. And so John's New Jerusalem is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament anticipated, the Old Testament prophets anticipated in a restored Jerusalem temple.

At the same time, it may be that John sees it as the fulfillment of the ideals that people would have understood as belonging to an ideal Greco-Roman city. And now John's city, though, surpasses that. John wants his readers to find their hopes and aspirations not in any city that they belong to or Greco-Roman city, certainly not Rome, but only in the New Jerusalem of John's vision.

Now, to move on then to verses 22 through 27, where we are introduced to the inhabitants of the city. We've already noted that at one level, the stones and the city itself are the bride. So we've already been introduced to the inhabitants in terms of the people of God as the bride of the Lamb, now making up the New Jerusalem.

But we're introduced to three other residences here. Two of them are obvious, and one of them is God himself. The other is the Lamb.

And the third one is the nations. Now, first of all, verse 22 is rather startling, at least for most people familiar with, for example, Ezekiel 40 through 48. Most people familiar with the apocalyptic text, Jewish apocalyptic text, would have been startled by verse 22, where John says, I saw no temple.

Now, it appears to me that, although John doesn't seem to emphasize this, it's almost as if John, much like Ezekiel's vision, where he sort of moves inward in his measuring and vision of the temple, John is sort of moving inward. So I think one can almost see that John is now at the center of the city. He's inside the city, at the center of the city, and he says, I saw no temple.

That is where you would expect to see a temple inside the city, whether it was a Greco-Roman city or restored Jerusalem, according to Ezekiel 40 through 48 and other Jewish apocalyptic texts. Almost all Jewish apocalyptic texts include a temple as part of the restoration of Jerusalem and the restoration of God's people. Now, in contrast to that, John says, I didn't see a temple.

Right where you would expect him to see one, John says, I saw no temple. And the reason is there's no need for one because now God and the Lamb are its temple. In other words, God and the Lamb dwell in the very midst of the people, making a physical temple, a separate physical temple, completely unnecessary.

Now, at one level, it's incorrect to say there was no temple at all because the entire New Jerusalem is a temple. John has taken the Ezekiel 40 through 47, the temple language, and applied it to the whole city. So in a sense, there is a temple, but the whole city is a temple.

What John is saying is within the city, there's no separate temple. Why? Because God and the Lamb are its temple. So, the whole city is a temple, but that's because God and the Lamb are the temples.

God and the Lamb dwell in their midst. The reason for this is because the very thing that required a temple in the first place throughout Israel's history, the very thing that required a temple, is now gone. Sin and evil as part of the first creation, sin and evil which barred direct contact between God and humanity, sin and evil which made it impossible for God to dwell openly apart from a temple, has now been removed.

Starting in chapters 19 and 20 particularly, we have seen the removal of all sin and all evil in an extensive series of scenes of judgment. Now that everything has been removed, including the old creation, corrupted by evil and sin, and sin and evil have now been removed, now God can dwell directly with his people. So, temple imagery is applied to the whole city because God and the Lamb are its temple.

God and the Lamb dwell directly in the midst of his people without the need of a physical temple because those things that required the temple in the first place, sin and evil in the creation, have now all been removed. Now, because of that, because God and the Lamb are in the center of the city and are the temple, and God's presence now is co-extensive with the entire city and the entire new creation, John can say there is no need for the sun or moon. Why? Number one, because the precious stones give off light, but more significantly John tells us because God and the Lamb are its light.

We are probably to understand the lamp imagery as imagery from the temple. God and the Lamb are its light. The Lamb is its lamp, so that once more, this is a place, this is a temple, a sanctuary, completely infused by God's presence.

But now, God's presence is not limited to a physical temple in one corner of the city. The entire city, New Jerusalem, and I would suggest the entire new creation, is now a holy temple where God dwells. John is drawing, I think, very clearly, almost as we have already noted too, that if you took away all the Old Testament allusions, you wouldn't have much left in this vision.

But Isaiah has played a very crucial role. It's interesting that Ezekiel has dominated the first part of the vision, along with Isaiah 54, though. But now John is going to draw primarily on text from Isaiah, especially 60-63.

Then, in chapter 22, John is going to return back to his Ezekiel model, Ezekiel chapter 47. But in chapter 60 and verse 19, John says in chapter 60, Isaiah is in the context of an end-time restoration of God's people. Isaiah says, "...the sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory." So Isaiah 60 provides the model here for John to say there's no need for the sun or moon to shine in the new creation or to provide light because God and the Lamb are now its light.

Notice that John adds the Lamb as also giving light. But this is a city so suffused with God's glory, His glorious splendor, and His presence that there is no need in fulfillment of Isaiah 60; there's no need of the light. If you go back to the first three verses of Isaiah 60, "...arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

See, darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you, and His glory appears over you." I'll stop right there and read verse 3 in just a moment because John also draws in verse 3. But the important point is to further demonstrate that this is a temple where God's presence is now co-extensive with the entire city, people, and indeed the entire New Jerusalem as a holy temple where God dwells. It's interesting that John goes on and describes this vision as well, in verse 25, "...because," and notices how these build on each other. So first of all, God and the Lamb fill the entire city, people, and temple, and because they are the temple, there's no need for an additional temple.

But also because they are a temple, because the glory of God fills the whole city, there's no more need for the sun or moon. Furthermore, in verse 25, "...because of that, on no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night." The reason seems to be rather obvious is that the shutting of the gates at night was to keep unwanted visitors or enemies out of the city. But now, there will be no need for the gates to be shut because there's no night because God's glory fills the city.

Another symbolic portrayal of the eternal security of God's people in the eschatological consummation. It's also kind of interesting that you have a wall around the city, but there are no gates on it, or at least they're never shut. So it's almost as if the walls are unnecessary.

But probably, we're not to make too literal a sense of this, but once more, I think the walls do indicate and symbolize part of a typical city, whether Jerusalem or any other first-century city, the gates are simply part of the city, and they here symbolize the security of the people of God. And they're so secure that the gates can remain open without any fear of harm entering the gate or anything that would harm or defile the people of God. The light, then, is the primary theme here, the light that comes from the glorious presence of God, the light as you find elsewhere in the Old Testament, especially in association with God's presence; the light symbolizes God's presence and his dwelling with his people.

Yet the light functions in another way, and that is the light functions to attract the nations. Notice verse 24: the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. Verse 26, the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

These two verses are probably to be understood in terms of, well, the first one, verse 24, which is that it's the light that attracts the nations, it's the light that draws the nations. And then the fact that the doors are open in verse 25 not only indicates the security and there's no need to worry about unwanted visitors coming in, but the gates are also open because of verse 26, to receive the glory and honor of the nations. Now, the first thing to note, and I want to talk a little bit about this.

The first thing to note is that John is heavily dependent once more on the text right out of Isaiah. 24 seems especially to reflect Isaiah chapter 2, which, right at the beginning of the book, you have this vision or this statement of end-time salvation in Isaiah chapter 2 and starting of verse 2, in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the nations. It will be raised above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it.

And this actually introduces an important theme throughout Isaiah, which is one of the reasons why John draws so heavily on Isaiah in this end-time vision because Isaiah portrays the inclusion of the nations in eschatological salvation. The drawing of the nations to come and worship God in Jerusalem. So all the nations will stream to it.

Many people will come and say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Israel. He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.

The word of the Lord, the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He will judge between nations and settle disputes. And I'll stop right there, but I want you to know this image of the nations streaming to the city to learn the ways of the Lord and to walk in its paths. Now, John, in reflecting that text says the nations will walk in its light.

That imagery of walking, I think, comes right out of Isaiah 2. So what this suggests is that the nations here are not just playing some subsidiary role, but the nations are actually coming as part of the people of God. This is a vision of the conversion of the nations to become part of God's people. We see the same theme later on in Isaiah chapter 60 in the text we just read that associates light with the new Jerusalem and God's light now filling the city in chapter 60.

We read verses one and two, but then starting with verse three, after saying the darkness covers the earth, but the Lord will rise upon you. His glory appears over you. The glory of the Lord will now be their light.

Now notice verse three: nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Also, note verse five, then you will look and be radiant. Your heart will throb and swell with joy.

The wealth on the seas will be brought to you. To you, the riches of the nations have come. Verse six, herds of camels will come to your land.

Young camels of Midian and Ephah and all from Sheba will come bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord. And one last text, verse 11, your gates will always stand open. They will never be shut day or night.

The text that John alludes to so that men may bring your wealth, the wealth of the nations that their kings led in triumphal procession. In other words, the light functions to attract the nations, and the open gates are to receive the influx of the nations, bringing their wealth into the new Jerusalem in fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 60 and Isaiah chapter 2 as well. Now, one of the questions that this text brings up to introduce to you is, who are these nations that now come into the new Jerusalem? It almost portrays them as being outside and now entering.

Who are these nations and how are we to understand them entering into the new Jerusalem? How are they outside and now they come in apparently? And the reason I raise this is that when you get to the end of chapter 20, there's nobody left. All the nations have been judged and destroyed, all of them. So, I don't think we can necessarily conceive of this as well.

These are the survivors of that judgment. Maybe that's true, but Revelation isn't clear on that. Revelation simply says, all the nations who have been gathered for battle, all the kings of the earth and all the nations, every last person, slave, free, whoever, have now perished at God's end time judgment.

So, at the end of verse 20, there's nobody left. All evil, all sin, all who have thrown in their lot with a beast, everyone has now been removed in a comprehensive final scene of judgment. So, where do these nations come from? Who are they, and where do they come from, and how do they enter into the new Jerusalem? Let me make three or four comments that hopefully will help us to sort through these issues.

First of all, the inclusion of the nations here is added, I think, just because this part of John's illusion is Isaiah 60. Part of the program of restoration in Isaiah is the inclusion of the nations. So, John has been drawing on Isaiah, so the inclusion of the nations is going to be part of his illusion back to Isaiah 60 and the rest of the book of Isaiah.

But, we'll see there's more than that because the inclusion of the nations, people from every tribe, language, tongue, and nation has been a dominant theme of John's apocalypse all the way up until now. So, it's got to be more than just an illusion to Isaiah 60, but if John is following Isaiah's picture of restoration, end-time restoration, it is natural that he would include the inclusion of the nations, especially since it fits his theme of people from every tribe and language and tongue. The second observation is the fact that they enter Jerusalem should not be taken too literally, as if they were outside of the new creation.

After the new creation and the new Jerusalem have been established, now they're outside of it, and now we see that they finally get in it. But, this language of entering into the new Jerusalem is probably just part of Isaiah's language and John does not intend us to take it too literally, as if they're outside at some point. After the new creation has arrived, they're outside and now they enter in.

Probably, the entering takes place when the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and everyone else enters into it and becomes part of it. But, John's not interested in telling us when they get in or are they outside and they come in. We probably should not take that language with strict literalness, as if they're outside somewhere in the new creation and they enter in.

Or worse, some suggest these are the nations who have been punished in the lake of fire, and now they're allowed to leave the lake of fire and enter the new Jerusalem. No, John's just using the language from Isaiah and doesn't, I don't think, mean for us to take it with strict geographical literalness. But, he simply wants to allude back to Isaiah chapter 2, chapter 60.



Now, the question that I want to deal with next is, who are these nations, and where do they come from? Especially since at the end of 20, all the nations have been judged. Apparently, there's no nations left. There's no kings of the earth.

There are no nations. Those who have opposed God's people, the nations and kings of the earth, that's the language of those who have been destroyed, those who have been deceived by the beast to associate with the beast and collude with the beast and commit adultery with the beast. That's who the kings of the earth and the nations are.

And they've been judged and destroyed in chapters 19 and 20. And at the end of 20, there's apparently nobody left. So, who are the nations and the kings that now are attracted to the light of the new Jerusalem, who now come through the open gates to bring their glory into it, to contribute their goods to it, to now come and walk in its light and worship God? In other words, apparently these are nations that have been converted and are now part of the eschatological people of God and now enter the new Jerusalem.

Who are they and where do they come from? In the next section, we'll spend a little bit of time trying to unravel that and try to propose a possible solution, a possible way of looking at this feature of Revelation 21 and the new Jerusalem.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is lecture 29 on Revelation 21, The Bride, New Jerusalem, continued.