

Dr. David L. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 29, Revelation 21: Bride, New Jerusalem continued, 6-Min. Video Overview

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Hey everyone, so today we're diving into one of the most wild, vivid, and honestly confusing visions in the entire Bible: the New Jerusalem from the book of Revelation. It is this absolutely breathtaking image, but the big question is: what are we actually looking at? Okay, let's just jump right in. The vision describes this perfect cube of a city, almost 1,500 miles long, wide, and high, all made of what sounds like impossible materials.

I mean, can you even picture that? So the puzzle that has fascinated people for centuries is this. Is this a literal blueprint for some future metropolis, or is it a really powerful message that's just written in the language of symbols? So here's the first crucial point we have to get our heads around. The author, John, isn't really describing a physical place; he's describing people.

The source material makes it really clear that he's using the image of the ultimate city to symbolize the perfected people of God, finally in their complete and final state. To really get this, we kind of have to become detectives for a minute and decode the clues that are hidden all through the details of this vision. And our first stop? The city's completely bizarre measurements.

First, we're told the city's length, width, and height are all 12,000 stadia. Now that makes it a perfect cube, about 1,500 miles on each side. Just to give you some perspective, that's a city that would reach far, far into the exosphere.

It's huge. But then we get the measurement for the wall. It's 144 cubits thick.

That's only about 200 feet. So wait, a 200-foot-thick wall for a 1,500-mile-high city? Architecturally, that makes absolutely zero sense. And that right there? That's the giveaway.

This completely wild disproportion is our biggest clue. We're not supposed to be trying to draw this thing. We're supposed to stop and ask, okay, what do these numbers actually mean? And this is where the code just cracks wide open.

You see, both numbers are multiples of 12. And 12 is the number for the people of God. You've got the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles.

So 12,000 stadia isn't a distance. It's a symbol for the vast, complete population of God's people. And that 144-cubit wall? Well, that's 12 times 12.

It symbolizes their total, unbreakable security. See? It's not about architecture at all. It's all about their identity and their safety.

All right, so if the numbers are code, what about the building materials? Let's unpack the gold and the jewels, because you can probably guess they're just as symbolic. The vision says the city was made of pure, transparent gold. Now, this isn't just about being rich.

The source explains that this gold immediately connects the city to two huge ideas from the Old Testament. First, gold was the main material used in the tabernacle and the temple. So it's basically identifying this entire city as a holy dwelling place for God.

And second, the book of Genesis mentions good gold in the land right near the Garden of Eden. So the gold is telling us this isn't just a temple. It's a full-on return to paradise.

Then you get to the 12 foundations, each one a different precious stone. And this is where it gets even more layered. It's like an The source shows us at least five levels of meaning here.

First, there's the obvious, sheer beauty, representing God's glory. But then it's also a stark contrast to the corrupt, jewel-covered, prostitute Babylon, which was code for Rome. And then you realize, wait, the 12 stones were called the high priest's breastplate, which means all of God's people are now priests.

They also point back to Eden, which was said to be filled with precious stones. And finally, they're the adornment of a bride, getting ready for her husband Jesus. It's just packed with meaning.

Okay, so we've looked at the walls, the foundations, but now we move to the very center of the city. And this is where the vision delivers its most stunning and radical twist. It's something that would have absolutely shocked any first-century reader.

So after borrowing all this imagery from Old Testament temple blueprints, John just drops a bombshell. He says, I did not see a temple in the city. Right when you'd expect to see the most sacred building of all, there's nothing.

So why? Why no temple? Well, the reason is just profound. A physical temple existed for one basic reason: to create a necessary separation between a holy God and a world that was tainted by sin and evil. But in this new Jerusalem, all that sin and evil have finally been judged and removed.

That separation isn't needed anymore. God's presence is now direct; it's total, and it's completely unfiltered. He and the Lamb are the temple.

And you know what? It's the exact same logic for the light source. There's no sun or moon, because created light is basically obsolete now. The unfiltered, glorious presence of God himself is the light, and the Lamb is the lamp.

This actually fulfills prophecies from the book of Isaiah, which looked forward to a day when the Lord himself would be an everlasting light for his people. But the vision doesn't just tie everything up in a neat little bow. After all these powerful symbols of completion and perfection, it leaves us with one last, really intriguing puzzle that scholars still debate to this day.

We're told that the city gates will never be shut, and through those always-open gates, the nations and their kings will come streaming in, attracted by the city's divine light, bringing all their glory and honor with them. It's this beautiful picture of inclusion. But here's the paradox.

The source points out that the chapters right before this vision describe in pretty graphic detail the final and total judgment of all the rebellious nations and kings of the earth. Everyone who's sided with evil has just been removed from the picture. So you'd think there's literally nobody left.

So the final question hanging in the air is this. If all the opposing nations and their leaders have been judged and removed, who are these people walking into the city? The text doesn't explicitly tell us. And this is why the vision matters so much.

It refuses to give us a neat, tidy ending. Instead, it leaves us with this provocative mystery about the sheer, surprising scope of God's restorative plan. It paints a picture of a perfected community that isn't just secure, but is also unexpectedly and radically inclusive.

And that's the real power of this vision—not as a blueprint, but as this breathtaking symbol of ultimate hope.