

Revelation 21, The Bride New Jerusalem Cont.

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Dave Mathewson continues his exposition of Revelation 21, examining the symbolic architectural features, measurements, and inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. He demonstrates that the city's massive cubic dimensions, gold composition, and twelve foundation stones symbolize the perfected, secure, and complete people of God functioning as a cosmic temple. Furthermore, Mathewson explains how the absence of a physical temple and the illumination by God and the Lamb signify God's immediate presence dwelling among His redeemed people. Finally, he addresses the inclusion and conversion of the nations, drawing on Isaiah 2 and 60 to show the universal scope of eschatological restoration.

Outline

I. Introduction to Revelation 21: The City as the Symbolic People of God

A. Two Primary Considerations for Interpreting the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9–27)

1. Building/Temple imagery refers symbolically to the redeemed people of God rather than a literal architectural blueprint.
2. Textual division: verses 9–21 focus on architectural makeup, measurements, and features; verses 22–27 focus on the city's inhabitants.

B. Synthesis of Old Testament Motifs

1. Merges Bride, City, and Temple imagery to portray the consummated church.
2. Integrates Garden of Eden imagery (Genesis 1–2) as paradise restored and renewed.

II. Architectural Features and Measurements of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:15–18)

A. Background and Purpose of Measuring

1. Draws on Ezekiel 40–48 (temple measuring) and Zechariah 2 (city measuring).
2. Contrasts with Revelation 11, where measuring signified protection amid earthly persecution.
3. In Revelation 21, measuring signifies two key truths:
 - a. Symbolic portrayal of the eternal security and preservation of God's people.

- b. Demonstration of the vast extent, magnitude, and completeness of the end-time saints.

B. Cubic Shape and Symbolic Numbers

1. City dimensions: 12,000 stadia in length, breadth, and height (~1,500 miles square and high).
 - a. The cubic shape explicitly alludes to the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament temple.
 - b. Massive proportions emphasize symbolic nature, not literal physical architecture.
2. Wall dimensions: 144 cubits (~18–20 inches per cubit; wall thickness or height).
3. Symbolic significance of the number 12 and its multiples:
 - a. Multiples of 12 ($12 \times 1,000 = 12,000$; $12 \times 12 = 144$) represent the 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles.
 - b. Signifies the complete, perfected, and secure eschatological people of God.

C. Gold Construction and Dual Backgrounds

1. Old Testament Tabernacle/Temple background (Exodus, 1 Kings 5–7): gold overlays signify holy space and divine dwelling.
2. Garden of Eden background (Genesis 2:8–14): association with Havilah's gold and precious jewels points to restored Eden.

III. The Twelve Foundation Stones and Gates (Rev. 21:19–21)

A. Foundations and the Twelve Apostles

1. Foundations correspond to the 12 apostles (Rev. 21:14), representing the bedrock of the church built on Jesus Christ.
2. Multi-ethnic, global composition encompassing both Jew and Gentile into one new community.

B. Five Associations for the Twelve Precious Stones

1. Splendor and Glory: portrays the supreme beauty, value, and purity of God's dwelling place.
2. Contrast with Babylon/Rome:
 - a. Parallels the gold, silver, and stones of the Babylonian prostitute (Rev. 17:3; 18:12).
 - b. Demonstrates that heavenly Jerusalem far surpasses and compensates for earthly sacrifices made by suffering believers (e.g., Smyrna, Philadelphia).
3. Fulfillment of Prophetic Restoration: fulfills Isaiah 54:11–12, where restored Jerusalem is constructed with precious gems.
4. Priestly Breastplate and Temple Motif:
 - a. Alludes to the 12 stones on the High Priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:15–21), which was also square-shaped.
 - b. Signifies that all God's people function as priests in a cosmic temple.
 - c. Links with Ezekiel 28:13–15 (Adam in Eden as a priest adorned with precious stones) and 3 Enoch 5 (God's Shekinah glory in Eden).

d. Parallels Dead Sea Scrolls commentary on Isaiah 54 (4QpIsa), where stones are linked to founding members and the Urim/Thummim.

5. Nuptial Adornment: represents the adornment of the Bride prepared for her husband, Jesus Christ.

C. Gates of Pearl and Main Street

1. Twelve gates made of single pearls, standing perpetually open.
2. Street of pure gold transparent as glass: reflects standard Greco-Roman urban center/plaza layout.
3. Overcoming Greco-Roman urban ideals: true fulfillment of the ideal city is found not in Rome, but in the New Jerusalem.

IV. Inhabitants and Divine Illumination of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22–27)

A. The Absence of a Physical Temple (Rev. 21:22)

1. Shocking departure from Jewish apocalyptic expectations (e.g., Ezekiel 40–48) which anticipated a physical temple structure.
2. John sees no temple structure because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb *are* its temple.
3. The whole city is a holy sanctuary because sin and evil have been completely removed (Rev. 19–20), allowing direct divine fellowship.

B. Cosmic Light and Divine Glory (Rev. 21:23, 25)

1. No need for sun or moon; God's glory illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its lamp (fulfilling Isaiah 60:19–20).
2. Perpetually open gates and absence of night signify absolute security and unhindered fellowship.

C. The Ingress and Conversion of the Nations (Rev. 21:24, 26–27)

1. Nations walk by its light and kings bring their splendor/glory into it.
2. Prophetic roots in Isaiah 2:2–4 and Isaiah 60:3–11 (universal pilgrimage of converted nations to God's light).
3. Theological context regarding the judgment in Revelation 20:
 - a. Follows John's overarching theme of redeemed people from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation.
 - b. Language of 'entering' represents part of the prophetic restoration imagery from Isaiah, showing converted nations forming the one people of God.
 - c. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life enter, while impurity and deceit are excluded.