

Revelation Chapter 21 Handout

This portion of the book brings together themes from virtually every other section. It also contains a myriad of OT references and archetypal images. The use of numbers, dimensions and colors complete the mix. We can find Isaiah and Ezekiel references to the New Jerusalem and temple woven together. Finally we see the completion of God's work of redemption as we return to a state of Eden where God is with God's people and all is right with the world.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

*New heaven and new earth - the language here is one of quality and not quantity. The new means a renewed heaven and earth... not another one that is geologically different from the first.
The sea was no more - the sea was the place of chaos and of the beast and this is no longer a possibility. It is metaphor.*

2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them as their God;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away."

Holy city - this is the city that is set aside for the sole purpose of God's people worshipping God. A city carries with it all the meaning of a city today... activity, life and people. This is not a place where folks glide around playing harps

*Bride - it has been specially chosen and loved... it is ready for this moment
Throne of God is among mortals - now there is no separation between heaven and earth. They are all one because God has returned and taken his rightful place in the midst of his creation. No longer is there a reason to hide in the bushes and be ashamed.*

Wipe away every tear - all there is is life and so there is no reason to be sad. All that humanity needs will be provided by God. Death is gone. Temptation is gone. The initial things are all passed away... the things of sin are vanished.

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a

gift from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Making all things new - again this is the sense of being restored to the purpose for which they were created.

Write these words - they come as a promise to us and can be believed in order to give us courage

It is done - God has restored his creation and redeemed his people. He has been at the beginning and will be here to the end.

Water of life - image of Jesus being the water of life... eternal life in the physical sense.

Those who conquer - this is a word of encouragement to those who are still waiting for the new heaven and new earth.

As for the cowardly - again this is a word to those who are trying to decide which way to go... to give in to the forces of the beast and perish or be a conqueror and live. The image returns to the previous chapter.

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Show you the bride - we are circling back to the earlier part of the chapter.

Wife of the Lamb - Christ is brought into the mix as the husband of the church. It has the glory of God and a radiance - we are in the midst of metaphors here. It is something completely different from any city that has ever been seen. It is opposed to the dirty cities of their time and our own. This is a Godly place and not merely a sinful human place.

Twelve - we have a series of twelve here. We have twelve gates... meaning people can come into the city. We have twelve angels meaning that the gates are guarded in order that only God's people are allowed in. We have the names of the twelve tribes meaning that there is a continuation of God's calling... his covenant is sure. We have twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles showing that there is a new foundation to the city... faith in Jesus Christ.

15 The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was

using. 18 The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

Measuring rod - to measure something means to secure it for blessing and to protect it from evil.

The city lies - the measurement of the city shows its perfection. There is nothing out of place and everything is the right dimension.

The wall is built of - there has been much work put into trying to figure out the significance of the jewels. Some argue it is merely to show the glory of the city. Other refer to the twelve stones as referencing the stones of the Zodiac which adorned the standards of the twelve tribes. This comes from Philo and Josephus. Still others want to link them to the stones on the breastplate of the high priest.

Gold and clear as glass - refers to the purity of the bride and her ability to reflect God's glory.

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

No temple - there is no need of a place to go and worship God since God is right there in the middle of things. Thus there will be no need of a rebuilt temple.

No need of sun or moon - again wonderful metaphor bringing us back to Genesis and the idea that light was created before the sun and moon... the very light of the glory of God that gives humanity all that it needs.

The nations will walk - again the sense of journey returns. Life in the city will not be static but vibrant. People will be drawn to the light of God and the Lamb as surely as a moth to a flame and it will enable them to live as renewed people free from the power of sin and death.

Gates never shut - this will be a place where all of God's people are welcome and safe... safe because of the angels and safe because of God's presence.

Nothing unclean - all the unclean has been removed. This is also a warning to those who would try and lie their way in. It will not work. Only the truth will do.