

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by Watchman Nee

Let us see the details of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21:9-10 says, “And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”

When the angel showed John the wife of the Lamb, he brought him up to a great and high mountain. There he showed him the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It was from a great and high mountain that John beheld this sight. This reveals that if we desire to see the eternal vision of God, we must be brought by Him to a great and high mountain. If we are not standing spiritually on a high mountain, we will not see those who are living on the plain, we will not see the New Jerusalem, nor will we see the ultimate work of God. When Moses reached the Jordan with the children of Israel, what did God tell him to do? He commanded him to go up to the top of Mount Pisgah and lift up his eyes to behold the land which He had promised. This also tells us that in order to receive vision and revelation and to behold the plan of God, we must be upon the height.

Never think that just being an ordinary Christian day by day, not committing any great sin, is good enough. We must realize that whenever we take this position, God’s eternal plan is nothing more to us than doctrine and knowledge. We must hope to do some spiritual climbing and have some spiritual attainment. We should expect to climb a high mountain. Only when we do this will we be able to see the New Jerusalem.

What God desires to do, He will accomplish. What God has purposed in eternity past, He will obtain in eternity

future. First, there must be overcomers to bring in the kingdom, and then there must be overcomers to bring in the new heaven and new earth. But the problem is, who will be the overcomers? To be an overcomer, we must have revelation. If there is no revelation, it is easy to receive anything as a teaching. But we must remember that knowledge can never produce fruit; only revelation is fruitful. However, in order to have revelation we must go up to the high mountain; we cannot dwell in the plain. There is some difficulty in climbing a mountain because we must exercise our strength to climb. We cannot reach the peak unless we make some effort. May God grant us this spiritual attainment and deliver us from the low plain. We should not think that just being saved and not wanting anything more is enough. God must save us from this low level of living and show us His heart’s desire. Only when we are on the high mountain will we receive revelation.

The angel said to John, “I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9). The angel said that he would show him the wife of the Lamb, but John saw “the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (v. 10). The wife of the Lamb whom John saw was the holy city, Jerusalem. Therefore, the description of the city is also the description of the wife of the Lamb. The city is a figure, describing the characteristics and spiritual condition of the corporate Body whom God chose before creation.

This city comes down out of heaven from God. This means that God not only is concerned about the destination of this corporate man, but also about the place from which this corporate man comes. It is not just a matter of the future, but a matter of the source. The wife of the Lamb comes down out of heaven. The New Jerusalem is from heaven, not from earth. God is not showing us a man with a history of sin, who was later saved. (This is not to say that we do not have a history of sin and that we do not

need to repent and be saved by grace.) Rather, this passage shows us only that portion which is out from God. It shows us the glorious church of Ephesians 5 which is to be presented to Christ.

God desires to have a corporate man of the kindred of Christ. Since Christ is from heaven, the church too must come from heaven. Thus, Hebrews 2:11 says, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers." What are brothers? Brothers are those who have been born of the same mother and father. How we thank God that on one hand we were purchased with the precious blood of the Lord, and on the other hand, we were truly born of God. There are two aspects to the history of every Christian: one is that we were outwardly purchased of God, and the other is that we were inwardly born of God. From the standpoint of our history with sin, we were outwardly purchased; but from the standpoint of our history apart from sin, we were born of God, for whoever is born of God cannot sin. This portion has no beginning of sin nor history of sin. The fact that the New Jerusalem comes down from God implies that the church has never been on this earth. It appears that the church is coming down to earth for the first time. This is not to say that we did not come to God as sinners, but that there is a portion in us which is from God and is entirely of God. How we must thank the Lord that the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God!

This city is completely different from the city recorded in chapter seventeen. That city is called the great city, and this city is called the holy city. The characteristic of Babylon is its greatness, and the characteristic of the New Jerusalem is its holiness. Among Christians there are some who are taken up with greatness, but there are some who pay attention to holiness. Those who concentrate on greatness are in the principle of Babylon, while those who pay attention to holiness are in the principle of the New Jerusalem.

What is the meaning of holiness? Since God alone is holy, anything which issues from Him must also be holy. Saying that "both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One" means that Christ is holy because He is of the One and that we also are holy because we also are of the One. Only those who are of the One are holy. Only that which issues from God is of value; that which comes out from God, and only that, is the New Jerusalem. Everything that is of man must be left aside. The matter of the rapture is based upon this. Why will some be

left out? It is because they have so many things which are not of Christ, and anything that is not of Christ cannot be brought to heaven. Nothing which is not of heaven can return to heaven. Everything that is of earth must be left on earth, while everything that is of heaven can return to heaven.

The Light of the Holy City

Revelation 21:11 describes this city as "having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal." Jasper has been already mentioned in Revelation 4. John saw One sitting upon the throne whose appearance was like a jasper and sardius. The

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One whom John saw sitting upon the throne was the same as jasper. In other words, the meaning of jasper is God seen, God made visible. When man stands before the throne, God will be known to him as jasper. This is how we will recognize Him when we go there, but not while we are

here. What we realize today is quite obscure in many areas, but in that city the glory of God has the brightness of jasper. This means that when the New Jerusalem descends to earth we will be able to see God Himself. We shall never again misunderstand Him, nor will we ever need to ask the reason for anything. The light of the New Jerusalem is as clear as crystal, without a trace of mixture. In that day, everything will be transparent and clearly shown to us. In that day we will see God, and we will know God.

The Inhabitants of the Holy City

Verses 12-14 say, "It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel: on the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." How many are included in this corporate man? We are told that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written upon the gates, and the names of the twelve apostles are written upon the foundations. This shows us that the city includes the saints from both the Old and the New Testament.

The City, the Gates, and the Wall

Let us continue in our reading of Revelation 21. We must give special attention to the wall of the city. Verse 12 says, "It had a great and high wall." Verse 15 says, "He who

spoke with me had a golden reed as a measure that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall.” Verse 17 says, “And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.”

In the beginning God made a garden in Eden, and the serpent was able to come into this garden to speak to Eve. This shows us that there was no wall surrounding the garden. God originally intended for Adam to keep the garden. In other words, His intention was that Adam would be the wall of the garden. However, Adam did not guard it, and Satan entered. But what about the New Jerusalem? The New Jerusalem has a wall. On one hand, a wall includes, and on the other hand, it excludes. It includes and keeps everything that is within the city, and it excludes and rejects everything that is outside the city. When there is a wall surrounding a city, it serves to separate everything that is within the city from everything that is outside; it serves to make a difference between them. The New Jerusalem is the new man whom God has desired to obtain. The new man is in God’s presence and separated from all that is outside. The serpent can no longer creep in. There is a wall, a separation, a distinction. Every possibility of the serpent entering again has been eliminated.

When describing the New Jerusalem, the first thing that is mentioned other than God’s glory is the wall. Separation, therefore, is one of the most important principles in a Christian’s living. If there is no separation, the Christian is of no value. There must be a line that is drawn to differentiate that which is spiritual from that which is fleshly. The New Jerusalem has a separation, a boundary line, and we need to learn a lesson from this. Everything that is of Babylon must be rejected, while everything that is of God must be protected. To build a city wall is not an easy thing, because Satan hates a wall more than anything else. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to build the wall, Sanballat and Tobiah came and made every effort to stop the building. Nehemiah held a spear in one hand, and with the other hand, he built the wall. We must pray, therefore, that God will enable us to bear spiritual arms in order to wrestle with spiritual wickedness in high places and in order to maintain the principle of separation.

The city has twelve gates and twelve foundations, and on the foundations are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This tells us that everything in the city is based upon the principles of the kingdom of God preached by the apostles. Ephesians 2:20 says, “Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” This means that the revelation which the apostles obtained is the foundation of the New Jerusalem.

The gates are for going in and out, but why are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them? The Lord

Jesus said that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). We have learned everything related to God from Israel. The law was given to Israel, redemption is known through Israel, and salvation has come from Israel. Therefore, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the gates.

The city has three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. There are three gates in each direction. Gates are usually located in a convenient place to go in and out. Therefore, the fact that this city has gates on all four sides indicates that it is located in a very central position and that it is the center of everything. The New Jerusalem is the masterpiece in the center of God’s heart.

Praise God. At the gates there are twelve angels to keep the entrance (Rev. 21:12). Formerly cherubim guarded the way of the tree of life, but now the tree of life in the city is guarded by angels at the gates. The angels are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14), and the day is coming when angels will be subject to the church.

Revelation 21:15 says, “And he who spoke with me had a golden reed as a measure that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall.” Gold in the Bible represents all that is of God. The city being measured with gold means that the city can be measured by God’s standard and corresponds with God’s standard. We need to seek God’s glory, hoping that we will be able to meet God’s standard when we are measured in that day.

Verse 16 says, “And the city lies square, and its length is as great as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed to a length of twelve thousand stadia; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.” There is another place in the Bible where the measurements of length, breadth, and height are equal, that is, the Holy of Holies in the temple. “And the oracle in the forepart was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof” (1 Kings 6:20, KJV). The length, the breadth, and the height are all the same. In the Bible, only the Holy of Holies in the temple and the city of the New Jerusalem have equal measurements of length, breadth, and height. In other words, in the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem becomes the Holy of Holies to God.

Revelation 21:17 says, “And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.” Today can we say that the measure of a man is that of an angel? No, never. At what time will the measure of a man be equal to that of an angel? The Lord Jesus said that in the resurrection man will be equal to the angels (Luke 20:36). The one hundred and forty-four cubits will be revealed when man’s measure is equal to an angel’s measure. In other words, everything

within this city is in the reality of resurrection. Thank God, of all the things included in this city, there is nothing which is not in resurrection. Everything that is dead and everything that is of man is outside the city, but inside everything is resurrected and of God. Resurrection means that which is of God. Everything that is of man, once it dies, can never be raised up, but everything that is of God, though it passes through death, will rise again. Whatever cannot be bound or held by death is called resurrection. When that which originates from us passes through the cross, it is brought to an end, but nothing of God can be touched by death.

When John recorded the description of the city, all the numbers he used were *twelve* or products of twelve—twelve gates, twelve foundations, twelve apostles, twelve tribes, etc. The measurement of the city wall is one hundred and forty-four cubits, the product of twelve times twelve. Twelve is the number used in eternity. It is the most precious number in the Bible. In the first part of Revelation, there are many sevens—seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven angels, etc. But in the latter part, there are many twelves, such as those already mentioned. Seven means perfection, and twelve also means perfection, but they are not altogether the same. Seven is composed of three plus four, while twelve is composed of three multiplied by four. Since God is the Triune God, the number three represents God, while four is the number which represents creation, such as the four winds, the four seasons, and the four living creatures. When three is added to four, it means that God is added to man. How complete and perfect it is to have the Creator plus the creature! But anything which is added can also be subtracted and thereby lost again; so this completion is not a lasting one. But in the New Jerusalem, the union of God and man is no longer seven, but twelve. It is no longer three plus four, but three multiplied by four. Multiplication is a perfect union, something which can never be separated. When the Creator mingles with the creature it is twelve, and twelve is the number of perfect union. In the new heaven and new earth, God and man will become one, and God and man can no longer be separated.

Gold, Precious Stones, and Pearl

Of what materials is this city built? Verse 18 says, “And the building work of its wall was jasper.” We have noted jasper already. We have seen that the brightness of the city is as jasper. The meaning of this is that when we behold the glory of the city we are looking at God’s real image. By

knowing God’s real image, man can know the God who is sitting upon the throne. God is not far away from man, nor is He an unknowable God.

The function of the city wall, as we have seen, is to separate that which is within the city from that which is without. The fact that this wall is made of jasper means that the separation is based upon what is seen in God’s true light. The basis of separation is the seeing of what God requires, the seeing of what God is after. If man is not clear about God’s requirement, he will have no separation.

Let us read further in verse 18: “And the city was pure gold, like clear glass.” In other words, all that is in the city

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is of God. Gold signifies that which is of God, that which is placed in God’s new creation. Peter said that we are partakers of the divine nature. Within everyone who belongs to God, there is a portion which is of God. Before we were saved, everything in us was of the flesh, every-

thing was natural; there was nothing whatever of a spiritual nature. But when we received the Lord, God imparted His life to us. This is the gold which He has given us. Within us there is a portion of gold; there is something which is truly of God. It is regrettable, however, that although we have this gold in us, it is mixed with many other things; it is an alloy. We have God’s nature, but at the same time, we also have many things in us which are completely different from God. For this reason, the greater portion of God’s work with His children is to reduce them, not to add to them.

The outstanding feature of the New Jerusalem is that of gold, pure gold. There is nothing there which contains a mixture; everything is entirely of God. The one lesson which God wants us to learn today is to see that everything coming from us is but dross. Apart from the gold in us, everything which comes from us is refuse. When added to the gold, our goodness is dross; when added to the gold, our zeal is also dross. Everything from us is dross. In other words, anything which is not of God is dross. No one can stand before God and say that he has something to contribute to Him. God demands pure gold. In the New Jerusalem everything is pure gold, without any dross. The day will come when we see that everything that is not of God is on the cross. Everything that is in the New Jerusalem is of God. God must attain His purpose. When God says that it will be pure gold, it will be pure gold. There is nothing which can be mixed with God’s work.

Verses 19 and 20 say, “The foundations of the wall of the

city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.” What do precious stones imply? There is a basic difference between precious stones and gold. Gold is a chemical element, while a precious stone is not a chemical element, but a compound. Gold is an element because God created it as gold; it was made directly by God. But a precious stone has been formed from various kinds of elements, which have been composed together through chemical combination through countless years of heat and pressure in the earth. In other words, the precious stones do not signify something given directly by God, but something which the Holy Spirit has produced in man by much effort and many years of burning. The work of the Holy Spirit on earth is to continually put us into trials so that we may have all kinds of experiences and become precious stones before Him. The precious stones, therefore, are the product of our being disciplined by Him.

That life which God has imparted to us is the gold, while the life which God is constituting in us is the precious stone. Day after day, in all kinds of circumstances, He is making us in the image of Christ. This is the precious stone. God does not stop by just giving us a portion of Christ’s life; He wants to have the life of Christ wrought into us. On one hand, we must realize that except for the Lord’s life in us we are not any different than we were prior to our salvation. But on the other hand, after following the Lord for five or ten years and being disciplined and dealt with by Him, a portion of the life of Christ has been constituted in us by the Holy Spirit. There is something within us which has been formed by the Lord, and this is the precious stone.

In Revelation we find not just one kind of precious stone, but all kinds of precious stones. Some are jasper, some sapphire, some chalcedony, some emerald, some sardonyx, some sardius, and other kinds. All of these precious stones are the product of burning. They were not formed by God in a moment of time but obtained after being wrought upon through long years of God’s working. Precious stone was not given to us at creation, nor is it something we obtained when we became a new creation. Precious stone is formed in us through God’s burning day after day. It is a substance which is constantly put into the fire. When the fire burns in a certain way, a certain kind of mineral is melted into that substance, and it becomes a certain kind of precious stone. When the fire burns in another way, it causes another kind of mineral to be dissolved into that substance, causing it to become another kind of precious stone. Different ways of melting certain minerals together form various kinds of precious stones.

The precious stones represent the work of the Holy Spirit. When we were saved, we obtained God’s nature, but from that time, day after day, the Holy Spirit has been working the nature of God into us so that we may bear the fruit of the Spirit. There is not just one fruit of the Spirit. There are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and many others. The Holy Spirit must continually work in us to cause us to bear all these different kinds of fruit. When we were saved, God imparted His life into us. But the fruit of the Spirit is not something imparted to us by God. We bear these fruits when the Holy Spirit works within us to a certain extent. Even so, precious stone is something formed in us through the Holy Spirit by means of many different circumstances.

Not only has God shared His nature with us, but day by day He is making us a certain kind of people who can bring glory to His name. When you were saved, you obtained God’s nature, and when I was saved, I obtained His nature. In this regard, all Christians are the same; they all have obtained God’s nature. But in the ensuing days, God may have put you into certain circumstances in order to give you certain kinds of experience. He may have let you go through certain trials, certain difficulties, and certain sufferings so that you will become a Christian like chrysolite, chalcedony, sardius, or some other precious stone. God is working in every Christian so that each one may become a certain kind of precious stone. We all have gold in common before God, but after we become precious stones before Him, we will each be a certain form.

What the Holy Spirit forms in us by means of the environment will abide forever. When a Christian receives more dealings in a certain way, he will learn more lessons in that way. This will produce an outstanding character in him, a character which will not come to an end after several years, but which will abide for eternity. What he has obtained will forever be a precious stone in the New Jerusalem.

In many of God’s children who have walked with Him for ten or twenty years, there is something which God has wrought through the Holy Spirit. It is not just that God has imparted something to them, but they themselves have become that something; it is their very constituent. They have been disciplined by the Holy Spirit for many years. By passing through many trials and experiences, the Holy Spirit has formed a certain kind of life in them. Those who are acquainted with them acknowledge that something has indeed been accomplished in them. They not only possess the life that is given to them by God, but they also have a transformed life which the Holy Spirit has wrought within them. Not only do they live an exchanged life but also a transformed life. This is the precious stone. Precious stone is that which has been formed in us by the burning work of the Holy Spirit. The New Jerusalem will be filled with these precious stones.

Verse 21 continues, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl." The New Jerusalem consists not only of pure gold and precious stones, but also of pearls. Pearls are not formed by burning; they are the result of a gradual formation within a sea creature after it has been wounded. Therefore, the meaning of pearl is life which issues from death. Pearl signifies the life released by the Lord Jesus in the non-redemptive aspect of His death.

Matthew 13 also speaks about a pearl. To whom does this pearl refer? It is a reference to the church, which the Lord has formed out of His death. He was willing to sell all that He had in order to purchase this pearl. Pearl signifies something positive, not something passive or negative. It is the church, the new man, that God desires to create. Within such a One there is no problem of sin, nor of redemption. He was willing to sell all to obtain this pearl. This shows us how precious is the life which is wholly out of Christ. How precious it is to God, and how precious it is to Christ!

In the New Jerusalem, pearls function as the gates of the city. This means that everything of God starts from here. In other words, in order for man to obtain life before God, the life must not be something of man, but of the death of Christ, of the non-redemptive aspect of Christ's death.

First Corinthians 3:12 says that spiritual building should have materials of gold, silver, and precious stones, not wood, grass, or stubble. In 1 Corinthians 3 there are gold, silver, and precious stones; but in Genesis 2, in the garden of Eden, there were gold, precious stones, and pearl—there was no silver. In Revelation 21, in the New Jerusalem, there are once again gold, precious stones, and pearl; there is no silver. What is the significance of this? Gold, precious stones, and pearl—these three items—are found both in the garden of Eden and in the New Jerusalem. This means that gold, precious stones, and pearl are from eternity to eternity.

In eternity God did not plan to have silver, because silver represents redemption. God knew that men would sin and need redemption, but this was not something of His eternal plan. In God's work there is redemption, but in His eternal purpose there is no redemption. Therefore, the New Jerusalem in this respect is the same as the garden of Eden—there is no silver. This means that in eternity future, we will be brought to the place where there is no trace of sin. Today, however, we cannot disregard or lightly esteem

the silver. If anyone thinks he has no need of silver today, he must ask God for mercy. We cannot go on without silver. If we have no silver, we have no redemption, and we can do nothing. But redemption has no part in God's purpose. In the New Jerusalem we will not be able to find any silver. This shows us that God will wipe away all history of sin, because redemption is not included in that city. In the New Jerusalem men will no longer need redemption, because they will sin no more. God will bring us to such a firm ground that there will be no possibility for us to fall again. There is a life within us which has nothing to do with sin and which requires no redemption. That life in us is from Christ and it is Christ Himself. As Christ Himself needs no redemption, we who have a portion of His life will no longer

need redemption. Thus, in eternity there is no need of silver.

Thank God that we have His redemption today. Thank God that although we have sinned, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from every sin. However, God

has shared the life of His Son with us, a life which forever needs no redemption. One day we will live completely by this life and the history of sin will pass away. Redeeming silver will no longer be of any use.

We must see that the fall is not in the purpose of God, redemption is not in the purpose of God, and neither is the kingdom something in the purpose of God. The fall is not in God's purpose; it is something which happened on the way. Redemption is not in God's purpose; it is the solution to the fall. And the kingdom is also not in God's purpose; it is also the solution to the fall. Because of the fall there is redemption, and because of the fall there is the kingdom. All these things are but remedies; they are not in the purpose of God. Even so, we would never make light of redemption and the kingdom. If there was no redemption, there would be no way to solve the problem of the fall. If there was no kingdom, could the matter of the fall be solved? Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that God did not create man that he might sin. God created man for His own glory. This line is straight; this heavenly line is straight.

Revelation 21:21 also says, "And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." A street is a place for communication, and since the street of this city is of pure gold, the people who walk upon it will never be dirty. Today those who have bathed still need to have their feet washed (John 13:10) in order to maintain their fellowship with God. When we walk on the street of this world, we cannot avoid gathering some dust, and our fellowship with

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God is thus frustrated. But in that day nothing can dirty us; nothing can frustrate our fellowship with God. In eternity there will be nothing which can defile us; all our life and living will be holy.

The end of Revelation 21:21 tells us that the city is “like transparent glass.” How much of our situation today is not transparent! But in the future, in God’s presence, we will all be transparent. Even so, today we should not have many hiding places and many veils. We should not pretend to be godly before men in order to win their praise. Hypocrisy, pretense, and veils—none of these are transparent. When our actual condition is not so good and we pretend to be good, we are not transparent. Many times our words and our actions are quite unnatural. We imitate others in our speaking, in our conduct, and in the way we do things. In so many ways we imitate others instead of being ourselves. This is not being transparent. All artificiality and imitation are not transparent. We certainly do not need to live before God by any self-made holiness. We must remember that real spirituality is to bear the cross. Holiness which is full of bondage is not the holiness of the Holy Spirit. All play-acting and all pretense must be abandoned.

Every Christian should be transparent today, for in that day, in the presence of God, we will all be transparent. The street in the New Jerusalem is transparent as glass. Everything is visible there. Since it will be so in that day, we must learn today to be such people—those who are real, those who are transparent, those who never act what they are not.

The Temple and the Light of the City

Verse 22 says, “And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” These words are especially precious. We know that in the Jerusalem of the Old Testament there was the temple. Whenever man wanted to have fellowship with God at that time, he had to go to the temple. The temple was the place set aside for God, and it was to that place that man had to go for fellowship with God. In the New Jerusalem, however, there will be no temple, because God and the Lamb are the temple of the city. This means that the fellowship between God and man in that day will be intimate and direct; it will be face to face. Man will no longer need to go to a specified place in order to have fellowship with God.

In the Old Testament there was a veil in the temple. No one could pass through this veil and enter into God’s presence except the high priest, and then only once a year. Today in the church the veil has been split. Now we all can enter into God’s presence to worship Him in spirit and in truthfulness. But in that day God and the Lamb will be the temple of the city. We will not have to go to God; He will be right where we are. Today we go to God, but in that

day we will live in His presence. God and the Lamb are the temple of the city. Therefore, if we do not learn to live in the Holy of Holies today, we are the most foolish people. Today the veil has been split, and we can enter into the Holy of Holies with boldness. We must not stay outside.

Verse 23 says, “And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” This passage is connected with the previous verse about the temple. God and the Lamb are the temple of the city, and the glory of God lights the city. Therefore, there is no need for the sun or the moon to shine. We know that in the temple of the Old Testament the outer court was lighted by the sun and the moon, and the Holy Place by the light of the lamp. But in the Holy of Holies there was no window; the light of the sun and the moon could not shine in. Neither was there a lamp as in the Holy Place. The glory of God provided the light. Even so, the New Jerusalem is not lighted by the sun or the moon, but by the glory of God. This reveals that the whole city will be the Holy of Holies. The church in the future will become the very Holy of Holies.

“Its lamp is the Lamb.” God’s glory is the light and the Lamb is the lamp. This shows us that in the New Jerusalem there will still be something indirect. God as the light will shine through the Lamb as the lamp. This is not a reference to redemption but an indication to us that no one can know God directly. If anyone wants to know God, he must know Him through the Lamb—this remains true, even in eternity. Only through Christ can man know God. Apart from the lamp we cannot see the light; likewise, without Christ we cannot see God. Regardless of the environment, God still dwells in unapproachable light. Only when we are in Christ can we see Him.

Verse 24 says, “And the nations will walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.” We should notice one thing here. All the people whom God has obtained from the dispensation of the patriarchs, the dispensation of the law, and the dispensation of grace will become a bride to be presented to Christ in that day. All the people who are still living at the end of the age of the kingdom and who have not been deceived by Satan will be transferred to become the people on the new earth. These people are the nations mentioned in verse 24. All those who are living in the city will have resurrected bodies; they are the sons and the kings. However, those who are on the new earth will still have a body of flesh and blood; they are the people and the nations of the earth. The kings of the earth are the rulers of the nations. The fact that the nations will “walk” by the light of the city means that the nations on earth will come to the New Jerusalem, and their walk to the New Jerusalem will be guided by the light of the city.

The “glory” which the kings shall bring refers to that glory which belongs to the kings of the earth. They will give the city the glory of their domain. “Glory” here has the same meaning as “glory” in Genesis 31:1. It means the best produce of the land. In other words, in the new earth the kings of the earth will bring the best produce of their localities and present it as a gift to the holy city.

Revelation 21:25 says, “And its gates shall by no means be shut by day, for there will be no night there.” The fact that the gates will not be shut by day reveals that in the new heaven and new earth there will still be the difference between day and night. The nations can come to the city in their day time. But “there will be no night there”—in the city there will be no night. Since all those who dwell in the city will have resurrected bodies, they will never feel tired; they can serve God constantly day and night.

Verse 26 says, “And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.” This refers to the kings of verse 24. The kings of the earth will not only bring their glory to the city, but they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. Verse 27 says, “And anything common and he who makes an abomination and a lie shall by no means enter into it, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Everything that is of man and everything that belongs to the flesh are common. Therefore, whatever belongs to man and the flesh cannot enter into the city. Only what is of Christ and the Holy Spirit can enter; anything else cannot get in. “He who makes an abomination” in the Scriptures especially refers to idolatry, and he who makes “a lie” refers to a relationship with Satan, because lies are from Satan. Those who are related to idols or to sin cannot enter into the city. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life can enter.

In the new heaven and new earth there will only be two kinds of inhabitants: First, there are those who have been saved by the blood—they will dwell in the city and have their names written in the book of life. Then there are those who will be transferred from the millennium—they will continue to live and become the inhabitants of the new earth. Their names are also written in the book of life, but they will not live in the city. They can only go in and come out of the city.

The River of Water of Life and the Tree of Life

We have yet to see what God will show us at the end. Revelation 22:1-2 say, “And he showed me a river of water of

life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Here we are reminded of 2:7, which says, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.” The tree of life is planted in the Paradise of God. Since the tree of life is in the city, this tells us that the New Jerusalem is the Paradise of God.

Revelation 22:1 speaks of a river of water of life being in the middle of the street of the city. In Genesis there were four rivers, two of which have always oppressed the children of God. Babylon was built upon the river Pishon, and Nineveh upon the river Hiddekel. God’s children have always been persecuted by these two rivers. But in the New Jerusalem there is only one river—the river of water of life. This river gives life and joy to man. Psalm

What does it mean that the tree bears twelve kinds of fruits and yields its fruit every month? This is a way of saying that everything is satisfied for eternity. In eternity we will continue to know Christ and continue to receive the life of the Lord without any interruption.

46:4 says: “There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God, / The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.” This river especially gives gladness to God. The water of this river proceeds “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” The throne is singular because God and the Lamb are sitting on one throne. This means that the reign of Christ is the reign of God.

Verse 2 says, “And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month.” Once again the number twelve is used. What does it mean that the tree bears twelve kinds of fruits and yields its fruit every month? This is a way of saying that everything is satisfied, and that this satisfaction is for eternity. Every month there is life. In eternity we will continue to know Christ and continue to receive the life of the Lord without any interruption—there will not be a month when there is no fruit.

Verse 2 continues, “And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Fruit represents life; leaves, the clothing of the tree, represent our external behavior. The Lord Jesus cursed the fig tree because it only had leaves; there was no fruit. It only had the outward behavior without the inward life. In the new heaven and new earth, the people of the nations will have no sin, no death, no pain, no curse, nor any demons. This group of people, the nations, will continue living in the earth with the holy city in their midst. Being healed by the leaves of the Lord Jesus means that the deeds of the Lord Jesus will be their example. We will obtain the fruits of the tree of life, and they will obtain

the leaves. By following the behavior of the Lord Jesus, they will be able to live on in well-being, and this way the nations will dwell together in peace and blessing.

In these verses the street, the river of water of life, and the tree of life are all linked together. In the New Jerusalem, wherever you find the street, you will find the river of water of life, and wherever you find the river of water of life, you will find the tree of life. In other words, wherever there is activity, there will be the river of life and the tree of life. This means that as we learn to follow the Lord, all our conduct should include the river of water of life and the tree of life. Then everything will be well. The street is a place for people to move about. In order to move about we need to have all of our activities based upon the tree of life, not upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When the life within us generates the activity, the result will be the outflow of the river of the water of life in the Spirit. The outflowing of life is our street, our way. If the life of the Lord Jesus is not moving in us, we simply cannot walk. If there is not the life of the Lord and if there is not the outflow of the river of water of life in the Spirit, we cannot move. If, according to our own wisdom, we judge whether a certain way to act is good or bad, we are planting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not the tree of life. But if we act according to the moving of the life within, the result will be that the water of life will flow out to others. All of these things are linked together. All of God's work is based upon the tree of life and results in the river of water of life.

Forever and Ever

Verse 3 says, "And there will no longer be a curse." Thank God, Genesis 3 will completely pass away and there will no longer be a curse. Everything introduced in Genesis 3 can be summed up in the word *curse*. Even death is a kind of curse. However, in the new heaven and new earth there will be no more curse, nor will there be any death. All of the history of sin will be over; man will glorify God well.

Verse 3 continues, "And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it." The situation here is unlike Genesis 3, where God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. Here God is reigning; His very throne is located here. Now the garden has become the city, the place where God is enthroned. "And His slaves will serve Him." What will the slaves of God do in eternity? They will serve Him. We should never think that in eternity we will have nothing to do. No, we will forever be His slaves, serving Him.

Verse 4 says, "And they will see His face, and His name will be on their forehead." All of our work for the Lord must be led by fellowship. True service to the Lord is in fellowship. Serving alone is not enough; there must be the fellowship. They will serve Him, and they will see His face. Oh, how

many times when we see God we have already done His work. But I must say that we can do His work only after we see God. We should not be doing the work and constantly regretting—this is not fellowship. May God deliver us from any service which is not in fellowship, and may He save us from ever accomplishing any work without being able to fellowship after we have finished. We should never feel proud, self-content, or self-sufficient upon finishing the work. May God save us and deliver us from any kind of service which does not issue from fellowship and which is not in fellowship, and may He enable us to remain in fellowship even after we have finished the work. God's servants will not only have fellowship with Him, but "His name will be on their forehead." This is their testimony; this is what others who behold them will see. Everyone will know that these people are the people of God.

Verse 5 says, "And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them." In this city night is over. The lamp is the man-made light, and the sun is the natural light. All of man's work and all natural means will no longer be of any use because everything will be visible. The last clause of verse 5 is the most important. "And they will reign forever and ever." This was the purpose of God in creation. In Genesis God's purpose was that man should rule, and now He has obtained that purpose—man is ruling. This is not something in the millennium. This passage of Scripture, Revelation 21 and 22, is not a description of the millennium, but of eternity. They will reign unto eternity, and they shall reign forever and ever. God's original goal is reached.

God wanted man to have dominion over the earth and to destroy Satan. Now man is reigning, and Satan has been cast into the lake of fire. God's purpose for the man He created has been attained. On the one hand, God wanted man to be like Himself, and on the other hand, God's appointed work for man was that he should rule. Now we have seen a bride—golden, glorious, and beautiful—with all kinds of treasure within her. She lacks nothing and is without spot, wrinkle, or any such things. Furthermore, she is holy and without blemish. She is truly clothed with glory. The glorious church spoken of in Ephesians 5 has been fulfilled in this way. What kind of work will those in the church do? They will reign forever and ever.

We may say that God's plan can be frustrated, but His plan can never be stopped. Since creation God's work has suffered much frustration. In fact, it seemed as if His work was being destroyed and that His plan would never succeed. But in Revelation God has reached His goal. There is a group of people full of pure gold, which is something of God. They are full of pearl, which is the work of Christ. And they are filled with precious stones, the work of the Holy Spirit. They will reign forever and ever. **AC**