

New Jerusalem, Part 1

Study 24. Revelation 21:9-17

By James T. Bartsch, WordExplain.com

A. The Introduction to the City. 21:9-10

1. Who was John's tour guide? 21:9a _____

2. What did the angel wish to show John? 21:9b _____
_____ ¹
3. To what place did the angel transport John "in the Spirit"? 21:10a _____
_____ ²
4. What did he show John? 21:10b _____
5. From what place was it descending? 21:10c _____ ^{3 4}

¹ 21:9 - the bride, the wife of the Lamb: There is a distinct comparison between New Jerusalem, which represents the bride / wife of the Lamb, and Babylon in Rev. 17-18, which represents a prostitute religion / city with political influence. Yet there is a dissimilarity. When the angel showed John the Prostitute, he showed him an immoral **woman** named "Babylon the Great", etc. (Rev. 17:1-7). When the angel showed John the bride of the Lamb, he showed John a holy **city** named Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10). So here, the angel is using metaphorical language. It is not an actual **city** that is the bride of the Lamb, but it is certain **people** in the city, namely, those making up the Church that constitute His bride. It is in that sense that the city is the bride of the Lamb. Similarly, today we have cities that represent certain things. Hollywood represents movies, movie stars, glitz, glamor, and moral decadence. Washington, D.C. represents power, bloated bureaucracy, and corruption. Las Vegas represents gambling, immorality, and prostitution. It is not called "Sin City" for nothing.

² 21:10 - great and high mountain: Because the city was so enormous (21:16), John needed the vista from a huge mountain in order to view the city in its entirety.

³ 21:10 - coming down: This is a present participle, which indicates an ongoing process. As it turns out this city is monstrous in size, measuring 1340 miles wide, long, and high. It makes sense to me, given its size and John's description of the process of its descent, to hypothesize that this city is a satellite city that will orbit New Earth much as our present moon does. If that is problematic to the reader, then it is just as problematic that a city that size would rest upon the surface of the earth. We all know what tires do when they are out of balance. Think what effect this gargantuan city would have on the rotation of the earth!

⁴ 21:10 - out of heaven: We frequently say that Rev. 21:10-22:5 describes heaven. But if we are to be accurate, we must admit it does not. New Jerusalem comes down "out of heaven" and descends to or near New Earth. New Jerusalem and New Earth are not heaven. God and Jesus will vacate heaven and forever dwell with Man in New Jerusalem on New Earth (Rev. 21:1-4, 22; 22:1-5). What amazing condescension!

B. The Glory of the City. 21:11

1. What was the source of the city's brilliance? _____
2. The "glory" of the city was like the brilliance of a costly stone of clear-cut

C. The Wall of the City. 21:12-14

1. This city had a wall. How did John describe it? 21:12 _____

2. How many gates? _____
3. Who stood at each gate? _____⁵
4. Each gate was named. After whom were the gates named? _____

5. This means that New Jerusalem is the perpetual Capital City of which
people? _____
6. How many gates per side of the city wall? 21:13 _____
7. Will we still have the same directions in New Jerusalem and on New Earth
that we have today? _____
8. What support did the walls of the city have? 21:14a _____
_____⁶
9. Whose names did the foundations bear? 21:14b _____

⁵ 21:12 - and at the gates, twelve angels: The presence of angels in New Jerusalem indicates that the city will be the home of angels. These angels are not guards, for there are no evil people in the city, so there is no danger. They stand at each of the gates serving the purpose of God, whatever that may be here.

⁶ 21:14 - twelve foundation stones: The word "stones" does not appear in the Greek text. There were twelve foundations (*themelios*, 2310). We learn later that each foundation was a single gigantic precious stone (21:19-20). It is impossible to be dogmatic about the architectural schema of these foundations. My best guess is that each foundation stretched the entire length and width of this square city, which measured 1340 miles on a side.

10. This reveals that New Jerusalem is the future home of what people? _____
_____ ⁷

D. The Measurements of the City. 21:15-17

1. The angel who spoke with John had a gold measuring rod. What was its purpose? 21:15 To measure
 - a. The _____
 - b. Its _____
 - c. Its _____
2. What is the (two-dimensional) shape of the city? 21:16a _____
3. How did the city's length, width, and height compare? 21:16b, d _____

4. What was the length (or width) of the city? _____ ⁸
5. What was the measurement of the wall? 21:17 _____ ⁹

E. Time for Reflection

1. [Sam Storms](#) and [Greg Beale](#) are examples of scholars who insist that this city is not to be taken literally, but symbolically. Storms believes that the city
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⁷ 21:14 - twelve apostles of the Lamb: The Apostles certainly represent the Church (Eph. 2:20). This confirms what we have already stated, that New Jerusalem is the future home throughout all of eternity, of the Church, the Bride of Christ. The Apostles also represent the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). It is not true, therefore, that there is only one people of God throughout eternity. Already we have discerned two groups of humans – the Church and the redeemed from among the nation of Israel. There are also angels who make New Jerusalem their home, but they, of course, are not humans.

⁸ 21:16 - 1500 miles: The Greek text states that the city measured 12,000 *stadia*. The NASB footnote states that a *stadion* is 600 feet. $12,000 \times 600 \text{ feet} = 7,200,000 \text{ feet} / 5,280 = 1363.63 \text{ miles}$. $12,000 \times 185 \text{ meters} = 2,220,000 \text{ meters} / 1000 = 2,220 \text{ kilometers}$. This is an enormous city!

⁹ 21:17 - seventy-two yards: The Greek text reads 144 cubits. A cubit was the length of a man's forearm, approximately 18 inches. 144 cubits is about 216 feet, or 72 yards. It is probably best to understand that the angel was measuring the thickness of the wall, at least if Ezekiel 40:5 is a valid precedent. If the wall were 72 yards thick, it is possible the height would be greater. However, in Ezek. 40:5 the height and the thickness of the wall around the millennial temple were equal. Regardless, the wall would be dwarfed by the height of the city. However, the disparity would not be nearly so noticeable if, in fact, the city is constructed in the form of a pyramid, like the ziggurats of Babylon (see Constable, *Notes on Revelation*) <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/htm/NT/Revelation/Revelation.htm#p2768>.

- represents the people of God, and that the details are not to be taken literally. For example, the dimensions of the city (Rev. 21:16-17), he says, are proof that the city is not to be taken literally. According to these non-literalists, virtually nothing in Revelation 21:1-22:5 is to be taken literally. What are your thoughts? _____

2. I think John understood there would be readers who would doubt the size of the wall and the city itself. Storms argues that John's reference to angelic measurements is proof that the dimensions are not to be taken literally (Rev. 21:17). I think Storms has completely missed John's point. John said that human measurements were *the same as* angelic measurements. That demonstrates that John wants us to take the dimensions *literally*. What are your thoughts? _____

3. What have you learned about the beauty of this city? _____

4. What have you learned about the symmetry of this city? _____

5. What assurance do you have that you will be permitted to inhabit this city?

New Jerusalem

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