

## REVELATION 21:1-27

After the final judgment, John reveals for us a new heaven and a new earth – a place of perfect bliss that totally differs from the present world. This is the new Jerusalem.

In the first 8 verses (Revelation 21:1-8), John describes the relationship between God and His redeemed. In Paradise before the Fall, God intimately communed with Adam, gave him instructions, and provided for his needs (Gen. 2:15-25). On the new earth, God dwells with his people in intimate fellowship (Revelation 21:3).

Just as the Garden of Eden was a place without fear, pain, crying, and death; the new creation is a place where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

<b>Comparison between the Genesis Creation and Revelation’s New Heavens and New Earth</b>	
<b>Genesis</b>	<b>Revelation</b>
Heavens and earth created (1:1)	New heavens and earth (21:1)
Sun created (1:16)	No need of the sun (21:23)
The night established (1:5)	No night there (21:25; 22:5)
The seas created (1:10)	No more seas (21:1)
The curse announced (3:14-17)	No more curse (22:3)
Death enters history (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Man driven from Eden (3:24)	Man restored to paradise (22:14)
Sorrow and pain begin (3:17)	No more mourning, crying or pain (21:4)

In the second half of the chapter (21:9-27), John gives us a description of the new Jerusalem regarding its holiness, perfection, adornment, and glory. The heavenly city is described in the limitations of human language of time and space.

### **GOD AND HIS PEOPLE (21:1-8)**

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

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

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

<sup>4</sup> And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

<sup>5</sup> And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

<sup>6</sup> And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

<sup>7</sup> He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

<sup>8</sup> But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:1–8)

**A. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)**

In the previous chapter, John was shown the time on earth when Satan was bound and Christ and the saints ruled for one thousand years. After the Millennial Kingdom and the final rebellion of Satan, John saw the original earth and heaven flee away.

During the Millennial Kingdom, sin and death had not yet been vanquished (Revelation 20:9). Now John sees the creation of a new heaven and earth which differs fundamentally from the old order. The new creation will be perfect. There is no more sin or death. Those who populate the new earth enjoy full communion with God.

The OT prophets saw glimpses of the eternal state. The Holy Spirit revealed through them that there would be a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22), where death would eventually be no more (Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14).

But their visions of the eternal state were often intertwined with revelation concerning the Millennial Kingdom making it difficult to draw a clear distinction between the two. Sometimes, the prophets saw future events not only together; but also occasionally to reverse the time sequence in their record of the vision (e.g., Isa. 65:17-20).

The sequence then is the Millennial kingdom, the casting of Satan, death and hell in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14), then the new heavens and new earth are created.

So, in Revelation 21, John is shown aspects of the eternal state which are markedly different from the Millennial Kingdom. Beginning with the first verse of this chapter, we are no longer in the Millennial Kingdom: there is no more sin, death, sea, or Temple.

1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth

The creation of the new heaven and new earth is in response to the destruction of the previous heaven and earth which fled away and gave up the dead (Revelation 20:11). The adjective “new” [Gk: *kainon*] is new in terms of quality and not in terms of time.

2. For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea

The first heaven and first earth refers to the Genesis creation. By the first heaven and earth John quite obviously meant this planet and the heavens above it. He did not mean the abode of God that Scripture also calls heaven (the third heaven of 2 Cor. 12:2; cf. Eph. 4:10; Heb. 4:14).

John adds that there will be no more sea. The new earth will have no seas, but there will still be oceans in the Millennium.

There are several suggestions as to why there will be no more sea in the new heaven and new earth.

- The sea has always been associated with God's (Gen. 7:11; Exod. 14:28; Isa. 27:1).
- The wicked are compared to the troubled sea (Isa. 57:20).
- The four vicious Gentile powers seen by Daniel arose from the sea (Dan. 7:3).
- The Antichrist arose out of the sea (Revelation 13:1).

Is this a creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) like the creation of the first heaven and earth (Gen. 1)? Or is it a thorough renovation of the present heaven and earth? Based on 2 Peter 3:10-12, it is more reasonable to see the new heavens and new earth as an entirely new creation.

**B. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)**

1. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem

This is one of five places in the book of Revelation where John refers to himself by name (Revelation 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8).

The holy city is also called the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10). Throughout Scripture, Jerusalem is considered holy, although at times it is described as an harlot (Isa. 1:21).

Jerusalem is called the "city of the great King" (Ps. 48:2), "city of God" (Ps. 87:3).

It is also known as "the faithful city" (Isa. 1:21), and the "holy city" (Isa. 52:1). Joel predicted, concerning her final state: "Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again" (Joel 3:17).

John adds the adjective to the city and calls it "New Jerusalem." Again, the word "new" means "new in quality."

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate destination of all the saints. Those who follow Jesus have no continuing city on earth, but ultimately seek the one to come, the New Jerusalem (Heb. 13:14).

Again, there are some who would spiritualise this new Jerusalem to mean the glorious presence of God and not the city that God has prepared for us. To prevent such private subjective interpretation, John is given a tour of the holy city by an angel, who meticulously measures the physical dimensions of the holy city.

## 2. Coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

John saw the city as it was in the process of descending. John sees the city descend in two separate visions. Here, he sees the New Jerusalem as part of the overall scene describing the newly recreated order. A few verses later, an angel gives John a detailed tour of the city which comprises the last half of the chapter (Revelation 21:9-27).

John also saw the city adorned as a bride. The bride is “prepared” – the passive tense means that the bride has no part in her preparation. The reason is that the bride is inanimate – it is a city. In Revelation 19:7, the bride “made herself ready.” The bride in Revelation 19:7 is made up of living beings: the saints. In verse 2, the bride is an inanimate object (see John 14:2-3; Heb. 11:8-10).

Just because the same word – bride – is used to describe both the church and the city, it does not mean that they are identical.

The Old Testament also used the bride as a figure to describe Israel’s relationship to God (Isa. 62:5; Jer. 2:2; 3:20; Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 2:19-20). This does not mean that Israel, the church, and the New Jerusalem are three names of the same entity.

However, this bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, now evidently encompasses two previous brides of Christ: Israel and the church; as to where the exact location of this new Jerusalem, the Bible does not tell us.

This bride – the city – is adorned for her husband. Whereas the bride at the marriage of the Lamb wears linen for her covering (Revelation 19:8), the city wears the glory of God and precious stones (Revelation 21:11). The garments of the city are not given as clothing, nor related to righteousness because the city is inanimate.

- C. **And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Revelation 21:3)**

This will be the last time that John (last of 20 times) will hear a loud voice. The exclamation – behold – denotes that the proclamation is an important one. The announcement probably came from the same angel in Revelation 19.

The announcement is that the new Jerusalem, described here as God’s tabernacle, will now be among men. Finally, the relationship between God and humankind that God has always desired people to enjoy will be a reality (cf. 7:15; Gen. 3:8; 17:7; Exod. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 26:11-12; Num. 15:41; Deut. 29:13; 2 Sam. 7:24; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek. 11:20; 34:24; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 2:10; 8:8; 2 Cor. 6:16).

God’s dwelling with us means intimate fellowship with Him. This is the supreme blessing of the New Jerusalem. Such a fellowship existed when God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but that fellowship was destroyed by sin.

There was a semblance of fellowship in a restricted sense between God and the Israelites, but they did not have free access to the tabernacle. It also existed partially when Jesus Christ “tabernacled” among people (John 1:14). It exists today as God inhabits the bodies of Christians individually (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and the church corporately (Eph. 2:21-22). But the perfect union will be in the future.

- D. **And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Revelation 21:4)**

In this verse, John describes heaven negatively. I take this to mean that after John had seen the new heaven and new earth, there was nothing on earth that he could compare it with. The best he could do was to describe heaven in terms of what earth is not. So what is heaven? Heaven is whatever earth is not.

- E. **And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (Revelation 21:5-6)**

In verse 5, John turns from recording things he has seen to things he has heard. “Behold” introduces a special pronouncement, namely, that God will bring a new creation into existence.

1. It is done

It is done is in perfect tense, meaning: it has become! The perfect tense emphasizes the completion of the task of creating the new order and the effects of that creative act which continue into the present as seen by John.

2. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

“I am.” Great emphasis is placed upon the One speaking and His uniqueness. This unique title of God is applied both to the Father and the Son (Revelation 22:13). It is also applied to the Son earlier (Revelation 1:11; 2:8). By the title, God refers to Himself as the eternal, sovereign God (1:8; cf. 22:13), the author and finisher of all things (cf. Isa. 44:6).

3. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

God’s promise is the abundant satisfaction for the thirsty, denoting His ability to meet the deepest needs of His people (7:17; cf. Isa. 55:1; John 4:13-14; 7:37-39).

**F. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (Revelation 21:7)**

The overcomer (i.e., every believer) will inherit these things (i.e., the blessings of the new creation mentioned).

Inheriting emphasizes the privilege of obtaining something because of the work of another in contrast to one’s own work.

The phrase “I will be his God and he will be My son” speaks of a special honor, not of merely of regeneration. John here uses the Greek word *huios*, referring to mature sons, those who are of direct descent from God.

**G. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)**

The sins mentioned here are some that typically characterize unbelievers, the other group in contrast to overcomers.

- Fearful – cowards who, because of fear, saved their lives but ultimately lost both their soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28).
- Unbelieving – Those who do not believe the truth are condemned (2Thess. 2:12). Lack of faith in the Son results in eternal condemnation.
- Abominable – Those who are unclean because they participated in activities which are considered abominable to God.
- Murderers – violent people
- Whoremongers – sexually immoral people
- Sorcerers – those who participate in ritual witchcraft
- Idolaters – those who take part in idol worship or consult false prophets.
- Liars – those who engage in all forms of falsehoods. Lying and deception are the words of the devil (John 8:44; 1 John 2:22).

## GOD AND HIS CITY (21:9-27)

<sup>9</sup> And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

<sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

<sup>11</sup> Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

<sup>12</sup> And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

<sup>13</sup> On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

<sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

<sup>16</sup> And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

<sup>17</sup> And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

<sup>18</sup> And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

<sup>19</sup> And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

<sup>20</sup> The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

<sup>21</sup> And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

<sup>23</sup> And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.

<sup>24</sup> And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

<sup>25</sup> And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

<sup>26</sup> And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

<sup>27</sup> And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21)

- A. **And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 21:9)**

The "bride," the wife of the Lamb, is the New Jerusalem (21:10; cf. 21:2). From the description that follows it also seems clear that the New Jerusalem is a city. It is not just a person or a group of people, such as Christians. Some have identified it as the church.

- B. **And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (Revelation 21:10)**

John received a fresh revelation beyond what he had already witnessed in an earlier scene (cf. 21:2-8). The "great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" should be understood as a "real" within the visionary experience. This is the announcement of the beginning of the eternal state.

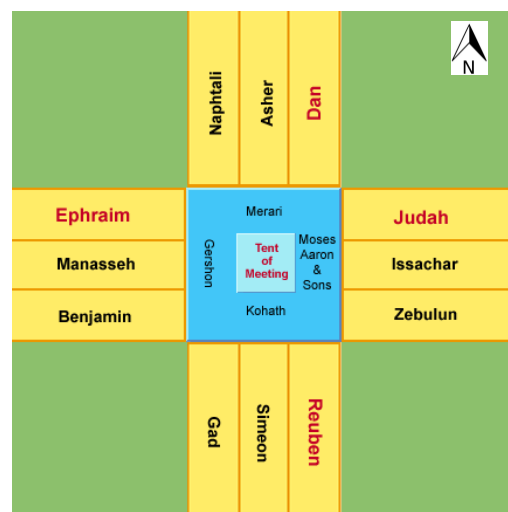
- C. **Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; (Revelation 21:11)**

This city is nothing like John had ever seen. The first and most important characteristic that John noted was its radiant glow. It shone with the glory of God Himself because He was in it (cf. Exod. 40:34; Num. 9:15-23; 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14; Isa. 24:23; 60:1; Ezek. 43:5; John 12:41; Acts 26:13).

John compared the glory of the city to that of a beautiful gem. Jasper stones were very beautiful but not always clear. This is probably a crystal clear gem with many facets of brilliance probably what we call a diamond. This stone described God Himself earlier (4:3), so its brilliance is a further reflection of God's presence in the city.

- D. **And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: (Revelation 21:12)**

The new Jerusalem has walls with 12 gates, with 12 angels at the gates, and on the gates are written the 12 names of the tribes of Israel. The angelic guards also present a picture of great security (cf. Gen. 3:24; Isa. 62:6).



If the heavenly layout were to follow the encampment in the wilderness around the Tabernacle, then:

- The gates on the east would be named for Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.



- The gates on the north would be named for Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.
- The gates on the south would be named for Reuben, Simeon, and Gad.
- The gates on the west would be named for Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.

If the names of the gates may be according to the plan of the millennial city (Ezek. 48:30-35), then the layout would be as follows:

- The gates on the east would be named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan.
- The gates on the north would be named for Reuben, Judah, and Levi.
- The gates on the south would be named for Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun.
- The gates on the west would be named for Gad, Asher, Naphtali.

**E. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:13-14)**

The New Jerusalem is not spiritual. It is physical because geographical directions still exist in the new heaven and new earth.

The city will have 12 foundations (cf. Heb 11:10, 13-16), meaning that it will be a permanent abode for the righteous in contrast to temporary dwellings that lacked foundations. The foundations may be one on top of each other in layers.

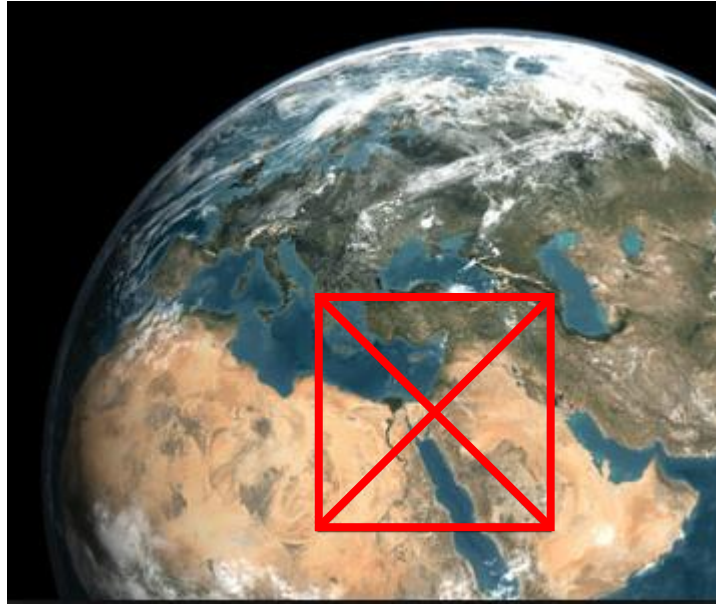
Note the distinction between Israel and the church even in the eternal state (cf. Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30). God had a role for each group and an identity separate from the other in the past and as He does in the present. This distinction between the foundations and the walls harmonizes with belief that the church did not replace Israel in the plans of God.

However, we do see a unity. Just as a house needs pillars and foundations, so the heavenly city also has pillars and foundations. Israel and the church are united as God's people in the final scheme of things.

**F. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall**

thereof, an hundred *and forty and four* cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. (Revelation 21:15-17)

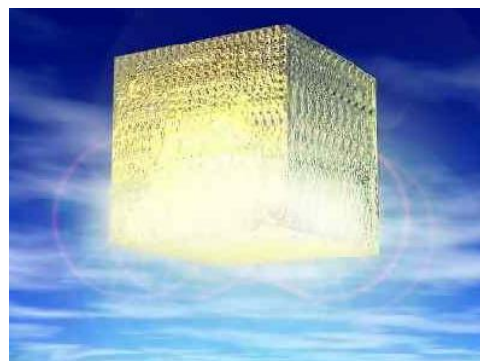
The angel accompanied John on a walk about the city to measure it. The angel has a golden reed. In verse 16, John describes the shape and then the size of the city. Its base was square, the same shape as ancient Babylon and Nineveh. The dimensions of this city were 12,000 furlongs or stadia (approximately 1,500 miles).



In verse 17, we learn that the city wall was evidently 144 cubits (about 216 feet or 72 yards) thick. John adds that the angel is using human units of measurement. Thus, these measurements meant the same to John as they would have meant if something else in his day were being measured.

- G. **And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. (Revelation 21:18-20)**

The “building” of the wall refers to the structure or the material that is used. The whole city appeared to shine as a mass of pure gold. Clear glass was the best quality glass in John’s day, so when he compared the gold to clear glass he probably meant that there was no impurity in the city.



John further explained the foundation stones of the city (21:14). The foundation of a building is usually completely functional and not decorative, but these foundation stones are made from precious gems.

The Israelite high priest carried 12 gems representing each of the twelve tribes on his breast-piece (Exod. 28:17-20). Perhaps there is some symbolic connection between these 12 jewels and those, though only eight of them appear in both lists.

Birth Order	Tribe Majority	Stone	Alternate Translation
1	Reuben	sardius	ruby, carnelian
2	Simeon	topaz	chrysolite
3	Levi	carbuncle	emerald, beryl
4	Judah	emerald	turquoise, carbuncle
5	Dan	sapphire	
6	Naphtali	diamond	emerald, moonstone, amethyst
7	Gad	ligure	opal,
8	Asher	agate	
9	Issachar	amethyst	crystal
10	Zebulun	beryl	chrysolite
11	Joseph	onyx	lapis lazuli
12	Benjamin	jasper	

**H. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. (Revelation 21:21)**

Each gate that John saw (21:12-13) had been carved out of one huge pearl (cf. Isa. 54:11-12).

John further described the street or pavement of the city probably referring to all the streets since all would be connected. These were pure gold (21:18), as pure as transparent glass. Old Testament priests who ministered in Solomon's temple walked on a gold floor originally (1Kings 6:30).

**I. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Revelation 21:22)**

Unlike old Jerusalem, there was no temple in the new city because God Himself was there. The whole city will, therefore, be a temple. The presence of God with man was the symbol of the earthly tabernacle and temple, but in the New Jerusalem, that presence is a reality; hence, there is no need for a temple.

**J. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Revelation 21:23)**

The new heavens will have no need for the sun or moon because God's glory will illuminate the whole earth (see Isa. 60:19).

**K. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. (Revelation 21:24)**

The city will be so bright that it provides light for the whole new creation. It is not clear as to who the kings of the earth are. Some believe that they refer to groups of believers viewed according to their old creation nationalities, which they will retain in the new creation. The word "nations" [Gk: *ethnē*] denotes Gentiles.

- L. **And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:25-27)**

In John's day, cities closed their gates to keep enemies out, but there will be no enemies in the eternal state, so the gates will remain open (Isa. 60:11).

The gates will admit these leaders who will bring glory and honour to God from their respective groups of followers. This is a picture of worship in the new heaven.

The prerequisite to enter the city is that the name must be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. In other words, only believers whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life will enter the city.