

**Rev. 21:9-22:5, Vision of the Bride**  
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**Overview**

1. The last element of each seven (seals, trumpets, bowls) opens into what follows. The present section issues from the Seventh Bowl, 16:17-21.
2. Main structural markers in this final section are
  - a) 21:9 echoes 17:1.
  - b) chiasm in 19:1-21:8
  - c) 22:6-21 has numerous parallels with ch. 1-3, and probably is to be handled there.
3. Outline of the seventh seal:
  - a) Vision of the Whore, Babylon, 17-18
  - b) Victory of the Bridegroom over the Whoremonger (Christ over Antichrist), 19:1-21:8
  - c) Vision of the Bride, Jerusalem, 21:9-22:5
4. Structure of 21:9-22:5
  - a) 21:9-10, Invitation and Preparation of John
  - b) 21:11-21, Description of the City. Threefold introductory summary of what the city "had," then amplified chiastically
  - c) 21:22-22:5, Life in the City. Inclusio in countered expectations.

**A. 21:9-10, Invitation and Preparation**

1. v. 9 makes it clear that we are to compare this with 17:1ff, the vision of the Whore. Culmination of the Tale of Two Cities.
2. 10a recalls Ezek. 40:1-3: high mountain; sees Jerusalem; guide with measuring reed (cf. v.15). Other details likewise from Ezek 40-48 (river; gates for tribes).
  - a) Ezek. in exile sees a pattern of the city intended for Israel's use in the restoration (43:10-11), but not followed. (Alternatively, Ezek's temple may be Millennial, but NOT the eternal state, as in John, for John explicitly notes that there is no more temple.)
  - b) John in exile receives a similar promise, but this time the construction of the city is not left up to sinful men, but accomplished by God.
  - c) Cf. Heb. 11:9-10; 14-16. In every age God's people are called to recognize themselves as pilgrims, strangers, exiles, and to look forward to the city that God has prepared for them.

**B. 21:11-21, Description of the City**

Threefold exousa "having", "had" (2x) outlines the description,

which is then amplified chiastically.

1. Summary:

- a) Its Glory: God's own glory (the light of the city), compared with a sparkling (not "clear") precious stone.
- b) Its Size: comment on the wall.kai\ u(yhlo/n,
- c) Its Structure: twelve gates. This phrase does double duty, serving not only as introductory summary but also as part of the first expanded section (cf. Eph. 1:19-20).

2. Its Structure (Detail), 12b-14

a) 12-13, Gates and Names

- 1) Following Ezek. 48:31-34, the gates of the city are named after the 12 tribes, three in each direction. E, N, S, W
  - a> Ezekiel's order:
    - 1> N: Reuben, Judah, Levi
    - 2> E: Joseph, Benjamin, Dan
    - 3> S: Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun
    - 4> W: Gad, Asher, Naphthali
  - b> Numbers
    - 1> E: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun
    - 2> S: Reuben, Simeon, Gad
    - 3> W: Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin
    - 4> N: Dan, Asher, Naphthali
- 2) Angels on the gates: cf. the watchmen of Isa. 62:6. (Though their role is now symbolical, since no enemy remains.)

b) 14, Foundations and Names

Ancient masons could work and transport single stones 30 or 40 feet long--the ultimate in stability. Here John sees one such stone as the foundation of the wall between each pair of gates, bearing the names of the apostles; cf. Eph. 2:20, "foundation of the apostles".

- c) Note the unification of the OT people of God (the tribes of Israel) and the NT revelation (the twelve apostles); perhaps represented in the 24 elders.

3. Its Size (Detail), 15-17

Again follows Ezekiel's experience.

- a) 16a, A perfect cube, cf. the Holy of Holies in the temple and tabernacle. This is now the dwelling place of God, the heavenly holy of holies.
- b) 16b, 12K furlongs is about 1400 miles!
- c) The wall itself is 144 cubits, 216 feet! Thickness? Height is out of proportion with 1400 miles.

4. Its Glory (Detail) 18-21

The city itself is made of precious stones, like one tremendous jewel. Chiastic order to what goes before: first the wall and city, which were measured in 15-17; then the foundations from 14, then the gates from 12-13.

Compare the breastplate of the High Priest. Here, the foundation stones bear the names of the apostles; there, the breastplate stones the names of the tribes. Again, unites the testaments.

**C. 21:22-22:5, Life in the City**

Inclusio in countered expectations, surrounding description of the citizens of the city and of the river of life that waters Eden renewed where grows the tree of life.

1. Inclusio: compare 21:22-23 with 22:3-5

- a) Both explain two things that are not there, and the reason for their absence.
- b) The second of the two pairs is the same: no need for light sources, because the glory of the Lord is sufficient light.
- c) The first of the two pairs differ: no temple (*naon*, innermost sanctuary) in 21:22, no curse in 22:3. But the reason given is the same: God is personally present there. Explanation: two functions for a temple: the dwelling place of God (function of the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies); place for sacrifice for sin (function of the altar). Neither of these functions is needed. God's presence in the city obviates the need for a sanctuary and shows that the alienating curse, with its need for altar and sacrifice, is gone forever.
- d) Critical difference between the two pairs: 22:23, "lighten *it*," vs. 22:5, "give *them* light." The first pair only speaks of the city; the second includes the role of the citizens, after they have been introduced in 24-27.

2. 24-27, The City and its Citizens

- a) 24-26, The city fulfills two functions toward its citizens: it gives and receives.
  - 1) 24a, it gives them guidance. Nations to walk by the light of the city, which in turn is the glory of God. Isa. 2:2-4, the law going out of Zion.
  - 2) 24b-26, it receives their tribute. Cf. Isa. 60 (all); 60:11 explicitly mentions gates open continually. The passage may also refer to the millennial city, since it mentions an altar and temple (60:7).
  - 3) These two relations must characterize our walk with God now. We hear from him his will, to guide our lives; and we bring our worship and praise to him. Neither direction by itself is complete. Nadab and Abihu sought to worship without obedience, and were slain; humanists today seek to walk correctly but without worship, and are lost.
- b) 27 Though the gates are open, a passport is needed:

enrollment in the Lamb's Book of Life. All others are excluded. Compare the similar lists in 21:8 and 22:15 (on which more later). This is a perfect civilization, with no corruption, no sin.

### 3. 1-2, The River

- a) Parallel to Ezekiel's vision in 47:1-12.
- b) Water essential for life; scarce in the middle east; presence of a river or spring determines the site of a city. This city carries its water supply with it: it is the Lord himself (just as he is its light). Nations have often worshipped the Sun or the Water as deities; we worship the one who made them, and who can supply them from himself.
- c) The Bible ends as it began, in a watered garden with fruit trees. Adam and Eve were shut out from the "tree of life," but now that tree grows freely along the river, and is available to the citizens of the city. We are back in Eden.
- d) "Healing of the nations": follows Ezek. 47:12, "the leaf thereof for medicine." Not to remove disease, of which there is none (21:4), but as a tonic to sustain life; even Adam before the fall could not live forever without access to this tree. We may be sinless then, but we shall always be finite, needing to draw on God for our support.

### 4. 3-5, Closing Counterexpectation

As mentioned above, brings out our relation to the presence and glory of God in the city.

- a) "serve him," *latreuw*, refers to divine worship. This is the sense in which we speak of "Sunday services." Better get used to worship now, since it will be your prime exercise throughout eternity!
- b) "see his face," a privilege denied even to Moses (Exod 33:20-23). Only when purged of all sin can creatures bear the sight of his glory.
- c) "his name in their foreheads," cf. 14:1, in contrast to the mark of the beast. We are called to be known as God's people now, in the midst of the contest with Antichrist, and those who bear the suffering that this name brings us today will wear it as a badge of glory in the blessings of eternity.
- d) "reign for ever and ever," enjoying the privileges of princes in God's eternal kingdom. We do not know what we shall be doing, but we will have activities. NB: the Millennium is only the doorstep to eternity. God's rule extends for ever.